

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM  
STATEMENT IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO  
INTEGRATION AND PROGRESSION**

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A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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**The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation  
Phase, with specific reference to Integration and Progression**

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**KEY WORDS**

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Action Research

Reflection

Collaboration



## ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation Phase, with specific reference to Integration and Progression

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This mini thesis analyses and describes the implementation of the National Curriculum in the Foundation Phase of the primary school. On the 24th of May 1997 South Africa launched a new curriculum, Curriculum 2005 (C2005). The underlying philosophy of C2005 is Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Since the adoption of OBE and the introduction of C2005 many changes have been introduced in our schools with a new curriculum that had to be implemented hastily, which was reviewed and again introduced as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). Teachers had little say in any of these changes and this has resulted in frustration and in many cases a lack of ability to cope with the implementation of the new curriculum.

I argue that teachers do not have a common understanding of the Assessment Standards and that they still need support with linking the theory of curriculum policy to their practices and with a sound application of Integration and Progression. This research is an enquiry into the process of curriculum implementation in particular in the Foundation Phase which was tasked to be the first to adopt the changes. Change was not sustained and I highlight some of the challenges that teachers still face.

A significant part of the research is the participatory action research process which is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation into the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase to inform and change my understanding of the actual support teachers need. The study is characterized by a cycle of problem identification, planning, systemic data collection, reflection, analysis and action. With the research I am striving to understand teachers' practices in order to improve my work as Education Specialist that supports and develops teachers in primary schools.

## DECLARATION

I, Diane Catherine Hendricks declare that *The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation Phase, with specific reference to Integration and Progression* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Full name: Diane Catherine Hendricks

Date: December 2009

Signature:



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FP	Foundation Phase
HOD	Head of Department
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
GET	General Education and Training
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
MST	Mathematics, Science and Technology
REP	Rural Education Project
SDP	School Development Plan
SMT	School Management Team
TWW	Tegnologie, Wiskunde en Wetenskap
DoE	Department of Education
EMDC	Educational Management District Centre
ED	Educational District
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
SDU	Schools Development Unit
UCT	University of Cape Town



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

In this chapter I describe my reasons for undertaking this research. I state the goals of the research and the paradigms I worked in as well as provide a brief outline of the mini thesis. I also discuss why I believe that Foundation Phase teachers have experienced enormous challenges to implement the new curriculum and I focus on the crucial role of the teacher in education.

In the 15 years since South Africa became a democracy teachers have been exposed to numerous training and development courses in education directed at the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 1997 and in 2004 the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS).

The successful implementation and management of the RNCS depend and rely heavily on what teachers do in educational institutions. No effort at educational change can ignore the pivotal role that teachers have to play in order to ensure implementation of any kind. Today the society we live in with ideals of democracy, equity and opportunities for all demands of teachers to be at the forefront of educational transformation that improves the quality of the lives of learners that will become the citizens of tomorrow. The General Secretary of Education International, Leeuwen, emphasizes the important role of teachers in change in education and society in *The Educator's Voice* (1999:5):

More than any social group, teachers are at the forefront of the movement in favour of literacy, democracy, equality, rights and liberties. They constitute a unique force for social change.

Teachers have a crucial role to fulfill and contribute largely to the development of learners who become the adult citizens of a country. Teachers must be regarded as professionals who contribute fundamentally to the workforce, economy and social order of the future. Policy implementation is based on several factors such as the nature of the social problem, the design of such policy and the governance system. The organizational arrangements under which the policy must operate and the will and capacity of the people charged with

implementing policy also impact on such policy implementation. Fullan (2001:70) states the following:

Many attempts at policy and program change have concentrated on product development, legislation and other on-paper changes in a way that ignored the fact that what people did and did not do was the crucial variable.

There is a need to consider the implementing agents' understanding and interpretation of policy. It is said that changes in curriculum policy in South Africa have underestimated the complexity of the system in which the changes are to take place (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Changes in curriculum policy in South Africa not only underrate the complexity of the education structure in which the curriculum has to be implemented but to a great extent also undervalue the role and importance of the teachers' contribution to the successful implementation of such curriculum policy.

Meaningful implementation of the RNCS should be rooted in the classroom as the experiences in the classroom have a crucial influence on the future of our learners and on how they will participate as citizens in the broader society we live in. The modern South African context presents teachers with challenges that include poor learner performance, limited teacher conceptual knowledge, lack of adequate training and support at schools, poor resources, multi-lingual classrooms, diversity and issues of inclusion. Curriculum support at school sites should provide classroom based support which could consist of demonstrations with learners to display the use of various strategies that can improve learner performance at different levels of progress.

There is a need to change existing professional development of teachers which generally do not allow sufficient time, encouragement or support to enable teachers to try out new skills, methodologies and knowledge in practice (DoE 2000). Further, the one-size-fits-all approach to professional development that is still in use, does not allow for the differential needs of teachers in terms of ongoing support, feedback and acknowledgment of progress. Teachers are exposed to many training courses and workshop sessions that focus on curriculum development without taking into account the varying contexts, communities and factors that influence teaching and learning at different schools and the changes that teachers are expected to make both at school and classroom level.

I am currently engaged as a field worker for the Schools Development Unit (SDU) of the University of Cape Town in various developmental projects in the Overberg, West Coast and Cape Winelands Educational Districts in the Western Cape. My involvement in school based projects focuses on the professional development of teachers through courses and classroom support of primary school teachers. The focal point of the developmental interventions is on assisting Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers with various aspects of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

This research study draws on my experience in the Foundation Phase with regard to my engagement in curriculum transformation and educational changes over the past years. The study is further motivated by my concern with curriculum development and specific interest in ways to motivate and stimulate teachers and learners in the current educational landscape which places huge strains on schools. There are enormous imbalances in schools across our country. Former Model C schools have benefited greatly from the apartheid era which has given them a distinct advantage with regard to facilities, resources and other related capital. These former Model C schools are the schools which were classified as white schools and which only enrolled white learners before South Africa became a democratic, nonracial country. The advantages that these schools have may influence curriculum delivery more positively than in less privileged schools which bore the brunt in our former education structure before democracy emerged in 1994.

We should therefore bear in mind that the factors that facilitate or inhibit change differ from school to school. Fullan (2001:49) reports on the overpowering nature of change in education:

The number and dynamics of factors that interact and affect the process of educational change are too overwhelming to compute in anything resembling a fully determined way.

Some of the factors of change that teachers have to deal with and for which there is no single method of achievement are the varied interpretations and ways of understanding of curriculum policy, the interpretation of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards and the implementation of the curriculum in social and economic landscapes which differ from school to school. Much is also being said about the fact that C2005 and any curriculum for that matter can and should not be implemented hastily and in one huge step which teachers

cannot cope with all at once. Johnson (2000:188) suggests that the degree of change should be considered so that teachers could deal with it more effectively without being overwhelmed:

Introducing regular small changes can allow teachers to vary their practice, find successful variations and be prepared for further changes. Such a gradual policy allows for an accelerated evolution of classroom practice.

The introduction of C2005 was overwhelming and teachers were expected to do too much with very little time to adapt and absorb all that was required of them. It has become clear that any curriculum change should take into account not only the different role players which include teachers and learners but should also have effective support structures in place that can assist with these expected changes. The Report of the Review Committee on C2005 suggests adaptations of curriculum composition to augment classroom support for teachers (DoE, 2000:23): “In order to strengthen support for teachers in classrooms, it is necessary to consolidate, realign and reorganize curriculum structures”.

The implementation of the RNCS is a relatively complex process. Integration and progression are one of the key principles of the RNCS and integrated learning and conceptual progression should be manifested in teaching and learning so that it deepens and broadens learners’ experience in the classroom (DoE, 2002:13).

This study could contribute to the discussion that influences the intended processes needed to guide the curriculum path as we in South Africa move along with it. This research could also contribute to narrowing the gap that exists between the theory and practice of the RNCS. The study could be an enabler to establish whether all the support mechanisms as well as the revised intended curriculum changes are assisting teachers with the effective implementation of the RNCS.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The RNCS was originally implemented only at Foundation Phase level. The motivation for this research study stems from my experience within the Foundation Phase over the past twenty eight years. I have been teaching in the above mentioned phase for 21 years. For the past seven years I have been engaged with primary school teachers as a teacher developer and

classroom supporter in school based projects of the SDU. During the process of critically looking at the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase I was driven by a desire to establish what the teachers were actually doing with regard to curriculum implementation. I also wanted to establish what could possibly be done to assist them with difficulties they might experience with curriculum implementation. I also considered the contributions that I could make as a field worker involved with teachers. I wish to develop understanding of the situation teachers find themselves in with regard to the implementation of the new curriculum in order to adapt the services I deliver to them so that they experience the development and support as useful and meaningful.

My experience over the past years have shown me that the intended curriculum is influenced by teaching practices, classroom management, the classroom environment, learning materials, available resources, the teachers' culture, beliefs and attitudes, school organization, assessment practices and expectations. Integration and progression which are key features of the curriculum is another aspect which has to be planned carefully and applied in a manner that can assist learners to achieve the outcomes as set out in the different learning areas.

Integration between learning areas should be relevant so that it can enhance teaching and learning and broaden understanding of certain concepts and content. The use of themes or topics in the Foundation Phase is a method that allows for meaningful integration across learning areas and across learning outcomes as well. The following are examples of themes that are used; my family, fruit, transport and our vegetable garden to name a few. Themes allow the learner to incorporate new learning into existing knowledge. It also facilitates understanding across learning areas and the use of language throughout the classroom curriculum allows for construction and acquisition of knowledge across learning areas. Numeracy and Literacy can be integrated when word problems are taught, for example: The girl has 3 biscuits. Mother gives her 2 more biscuits. How many biscuits does she have altogether? Words like 'girl', 'mother', 'she' and 'biscuits' used in the word problem can be linked to vocabulary, phonics and word recognition dealt with in the Literacy programme. Teachers can apply a range of words used in Literacy to construct different word problems in Numeracy.

Progression on the other hand should allow for the conceptual progress and scaffolding as learners proceed from one level of competency to another. Teachers must carefully establish

and plan which knowledge learners need to acquire at which level of a grade within the Foundation Phase. This is not an easy task and needs careful consideration in order to ensure that learning is structured in a coherent manner. The Report of the Review Committee on C2005 highlights the following: “The particular challenge posed here is of conceptual coherence or progression – how to ensure coherent conceptual linkage within each knowledge unit” (DoE, 2000:40).

Integration and progression are thus two intricate aspects of curriculum change in the Foundation Phase that need to be understood clearly in order for it to be effectively implemented. Fullan (1991:105) cautions that intended change is not always put into practice:

Do not assume that your version of what the change should be is the one that should be implemented. On the contrary, assume that one of the main purposes of the process of implementation is to exchange your reality of what should be, through interaction with the implementers and others concerned.

This research study also takes into account the recommendations made by the Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 2000). The report highlights the difficulties experienced with the implementation of C2005, the technical OBE language, inadequate training of teachers and the unavailability of suitable teaching and learning material to support the implementation process. The report further emphasizes that the then new curriculum failed to specify in an adequate manner what teachers actually needed to do. Some key methodological issues that have been raised by previous researchers also serve as guidelines in the study. Research on insufficient teacher support, finding a balance between school and everyday knowledge, and the relations between the intended, implemented and attained curriculum inform this study. In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the research I consider these existing theories and recommendations. Guidelines set out in policy documents are also a focus of the research. Policy documents that were investigated are:

- Report of Review Committee on C2005 (DoE, 2000);
- White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001);
- RNCS Grades R-9 (DoE, 2002);
- Teachers Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes (DoE, 2003);

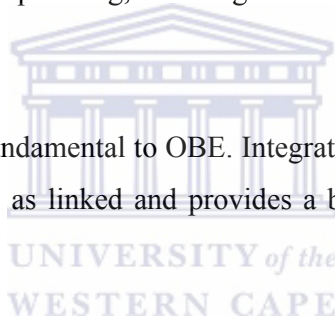


- National Policy Framework For Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DoE, 2006);
- Western Cape Education Department Assessment Guidelines for the General Education and Training Band Grades R to 9 (WCED, 2003);
- Education Vision 2020 (WCED, 2004); and
- National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for Schools in the General Education and Training Band: Government Gazette No 29626 (2007).

### **1.3 Aims of the research**

This study seeks to investigate the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in the Foundation Phase with a particular focus on how integration and progression are incorporated in planning, teaching and learning at this level of primary schools.

The principle of integration is fundamental to OBE. Integration provides a means for learners to experience the learning areas as linked and provides a basis to consolidate teaching and learning across the curriculum.



### **1.4 Research question**

To what extent are Foundation Phase teachers managing the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, as set out in policy documents?

### **1.5 Subsidiary research questions**

- What do the education policy documents expect from teachers with regard to the RNCS?
- How do teachers interpret and implement the RNCS?
- How is integration applied within and across Learning Areas in the different grades of the Foundation Phase?
- Does progression in the planning of the curriculum allow for the extension of the learner's knowledge and skills in an ordered, sequential process?

- How do teachers manage to reflect on teaching and adapt teaching and learning accordingly?
- How do I improve my own practice of assisting teachers in the Foundation Phase?

## **1.6 Literature review**

It is quite evident that the curriculum changes in South Africa after the transition to a new democratic order after 1994 is under concentrated debate. The literature that I reviewed reflect on various initiatives and policy documents that have been produced in response to South Africa's educational reform. Some of the literature involves Changing Curriculum (Jansen & Christie, 1999); Getting Schools Working Right (Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003); The making of South Africa's National Curriculum Statement (Chisholm, 2005) and an investigation into the implementation of outcomes based education in the Western Cape Province (Naicker, 2000).

While the policy documents referred to in Section 1.2 (Rationale) contain many visionary and well-intended ideas, the implementation of these ideas could be much slower and more difficult than expected. Jansen (1999:14) articulates the idea that some of the recommendations made by the Department of Education (DoE) will require a huge commitment and political will as well as resources which might not be available at this stage of curriculum implementation.

Authors such as Fullan (1991); Jansen (1991); Woods, Van Wyk and Mothaka (1998) as well as Waghid (2001) emphasize the need to remove the inequity and disproportion which remains at schools due to the apartheid regime in South Africa. The disparity in schools will to a huge degree obstruct effective educational change and curriculum implementation at many schools. Ultimately much debate, reflections and criticisms led to the adoption of the Revised National Curriculum Statement. The RNCS is a curriculum policy that was adopted after the publication of the Report of the Review Committee on C2005. In Chapter Four of the review report (DoE, 2000:61) attention is drawn to the fact that teachers are left on their own to implement curriculum changes with no adequate support to see such changes through: "There are no support structures in place to help teachers deal with the pressures of classroom implementation".

I was motivated by reflections such as the above to investigate to what extent teachers are coping with the implementation of the RNCS. Gillard (2001:4) argues that integration in the curriculum appears in various structures. I firmly believe that integration of learning area content and skills should be well planned in order to make learning more meaningful and relevant. It should also stimulate the acquisition of further knowledge and skills. Learning should progress conceptually and as the learners progress they are exposed to experiences that systematically build on their knowledge acquisition.

There is not much written and documented on how the RNCS can be implemented in ways that enable teachers to plan integration effectively and provide meaningful space in learning programmes so that teaching and learning benefit and learner performance improves. The ways in which integration and progression are understood and applied functionally are investigated through this research.

The writing of Woods (1996) particularly interested me when I searched for literature on what constitutes good practice in primary schools. Woods's research looks at the implementation of the National Curriculum in primary schools in England. In his framework (1996:62) the author notes the following possibilities of what good practice in primary schools could entail:

- The practice is in line with what I, or others in authority, define as good practice.
- This teaching works in so far as teachers and children seem to be appropriately and gainfully occupied.
- The teaching demonstrably leads to effective learning along lines, which can be made, or have been made explicit.

Some of the viewpoints in this study are formed around arguments similar to that of Woods (1996), relating some of the issues mentioned to our current curriculum implementation in South Africa. While this study draws on literature that reflects on curriculum change in other countries, I wish to highlight and attempt to give insight into curriculum implementation at the Foundation Phase level of primary schools in South Africa.

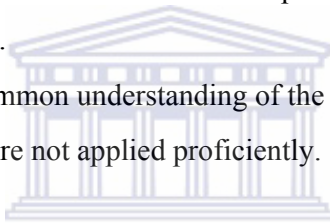
There is no certainty that this new curriculum is the ultimate and a flawless one. This reflects a view expressed in a draft document of the WCED, Education Vision 2020 (WCED,

2004:10): “The process for crafting a vision for the future education system that will serve all our people’s need is certainly not an easy one, and neither will the product be a perfect one”. Not much literature besides the policy documents of the Education Department is available on the RNCS. The guidelines put forward in these documents with regard to planning, assessment; outcomes and the design of learning programmes are some of the key factors which direct this research.

### **1.7 Research hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated with regard to the research topic:

- Adequate steps are not in place to provide enough follow up support after the implementation process had started.
- Many teachers are still not clear on the assessment process that needs to be incorporated in their teaching and learning.
- Teachers do not display a common understanding of the Assessment Standards.
- Integration and progression are not applied proficiently.



In order to test my hypotheses I asked a few teachers what their response is to the many different curriculum changes which have been initiated by the DoE. The following are some of the comments from some of the teachers in the Overberg. It should be noted that these teachers were not research participants.

“In a new democratic South Africa change was inevitable. It would have been better if they were thought through more carefully and introduced gradually, rather than in big chunks.

“I don’t agree fully with all the changes. Some I understand others I don’t. But things often turn out better than they seem, so I will do the best I can”.

“Some changes we have to make are better than others. In the end it is all up to us to make it work and not up to those who make the policy. Assessment is not clear to me”.

“Some of the changes we are engaging in will be worthwhile in the end, while others will not be so useful. Some changes like the masses of administration expected of us will have to be dropped or revised; that is inevitable”.

“I only hope that we as teachers will receive the recognition we deserve for trying our best in sometimes very difficult circumstances at schools”.

“Remember some of our schools are far behind others who benefited from the inequities of the past apartheid system, and while we try to catch up they stay ahead”.

This exercise emphasizes the fact that any attempt at introducing a new curriculum to be managed in the schools should be done gradually and should be fully understood by teachers as well as other role players at schools who are responsible for the implementation of such a curriculum. I also argue that one of the crucial factors that are overlooked in training teachers to implement the new curriculum is that not enough, if any, attention was given to demonstrate how the links should be made between the theory and the practice at the classroom level. Because of this lack of understanding of the connection between the desired outcomes and the achievement thereof, the curriculum is not managed and implemented as effectively as the policy sets out to do.

### **1.8 Research methodology**

The research was conducted within a qualitative methodological paradigm. I decided to apply a qualitative methodological paradigm because it provided me with the opportunity to study the implementation of the new curriculum in practice and to interpret the teaching and learning as prescribed by policy according to different grades in this particular phase of the school. The application of an interpretive theoretical approach in this research afforded me the opportunity to do a study of Foundation Phase teachers within their natural setting at their respective school sites. By doing so I was able to clearly understand how teachers are implementing the RNCS. Babbie & Mouton (2001:270) assert that the main features of research conducted in a qualitative way are description and understanding of situations. This interpretive theoretical approach could help me to expand my own understanding of the implementation of the new curriculum by teachers in the Foundation Phase.

As part of the research I embarked on participatory action research as research design which is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation into the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase. The research is characterized by cycles of problem identification, systemic data collection, reflection and analysis. The methodology of the participatory action research

design is done in the particular context of the Foundation Phase and is directed towards actions to be taken by teachers, and field workers such as myself in collaboration with other educationists. The data collected informs me as to how I should go about to improve my own practice in order to assist teachers in the Foundation Phase which forms a crucial part of the primary schools with whom I work. The methodology of a participatory action research design provided me with the opportunity to reflect on not only the practice of teachers but also my own practice within the SDU where my work focuses on teacher support and development at primary schools.

I applied qualitative research methods that included non-participant observation, questionnaires and interviewing. Different interview schedules allowed me to interview educators at different times. My reason for using more than one data collection method is for the purpose of triangulation. Denzin (1978) refers to methodological triangulation, which implies the use of different methods on the same object of research. I present reliable findings through data collected. Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) claim that the augmentation of validity and reliability could in general be best achieved by the process of triangulation.

A baseline questionnaire was used which consists of questions that are directed to receive initial responses from participating teachers on their progress with regard to the implementation of the RNCS. This is a type of open ended questionnaire. The baseline information required an initial teacher profile which assisted me in gathering data about my participants and their school setting. The questionnaire and teacher profile were distributed during the month of August 2006 and I requested the teachers to complete it by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2006. This baseline questionnaire and teacher profile are arranged in established categories used for coding and form part of the initial data that I wished to collect right at the outset of the study.

The research focuses on the Foundation Phase which consists of Grade R, 1, 2 and 3. I conducted my research at School X in the Education Management and Development Centre of the Overberg that resides under the WCED. In this school I engaged with two teachers from each grade. The school uses Afrikaans as medium of instruction and has pupils of different language and cultural backgrounds enrolled. I have chosen this school because I have a good working relationship with the staff and am currently working with some of the teachers on another project.

## 1.9 Ethical considerations

I have consulted with all the relevant role players and obtained permission from the WCED as well as the principal and teachers from the school in the EMDC of the Overberg where I conducted my research. The two education specialists whom I interviewed have also eagerly contributed to this research. The willing participants at the relevant school were on board from the outset and were informed about the aims and objectives of the research. Each and every individual participating in this endeavor gave his or her consent after being briefed about the research. The right to privacy and confidentiality as well as the protection of identities and interests of those involved were maintained at all times. The teachers and education specialists that participated were respected and treated professionally at all times and their input valued as such. See Appendix A (Letter to Circuit manager of District) and Appendix B (Letter to participants).

## 1.10 Organisation of thesis

The thesis is structured according to the following five sections:

**Chapter 1** serves as an introduction and describes the motivation and rationale for this research. It also presents the research focus as well as the research question about the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase of South African primary schools.

**Chapter 2** provides insight into the recent development in curriculum reform and reflects on the literature consulted pertaining to curriculum change and implementation. The chapter also explains educational development pertaining to our South African context and focuses on the RNCS with specific reference to the Foundation Phase of the primary school. Recent developments in curriculum implementation are highlighted as well as certain aspects of the curriculum that give perspective to the research. In addition to curriculum implementation the study also looks at reflective classroom research as a tool to inform and improve curriculum management as well as teaching and learning in the classroom.

**Chapter 3** explains the methodological paradigm, the theoretical approach and the research design. It provides the framework within which the research is done. In this chapter the

setting in which the research is located is described as well as the methods that were utilized to collect the necessary data.

**Chapter 4** presents insight into the presentation, analysis and discussion of data. The analysis of data provides insight into participants' perceptions of the RNCS as practised in primary schools in South Africa and as in the case of this study particularly in the Province of the Western Cape.

**Chapter 5** presents conclusions arrived at. It also contains recommendations for possible future studies related to the topic of curriculum implementation and management.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

In order to perform this research successfully the following had to be undertaken:

- I have done a literature study of OBE and C2005, as well as the Revised National Curriculum Statement with specific reference to the Foundation Phase and thereby provide the background and context within which the analysis of the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum is to be done.
- I also had to determine which research methods would be most appropriate to use in my research with the Foundation Phase teachers as well as the educational specialists.
- During the process I collected data regarding the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase.
- I analyzed data that were collected during the research process.
- The important research findings were summarized and recommendations are made to improve the existing situations based on the literature survey that has been done as well as to assist educators with problem areas identified.

The following chapter is a presentation of the literature I reviewed whilst carrying out this research. The literature concentrates on C2005 and the review which led up to the implementation of the RNCS. Chapter 2 also provides insight into curriculum policy and debate concerned with educational changes.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

It is the intention of this chapter to provide broad insight into policy documents and other literature related to curriculum reform. The chapter discusses various aspects that influence change and curriculum implementation. The role of the classroom practitioner and the various aspects that need to be considered in teaching and learning are highlighted. I am also considering the three elements identified in Botha (2002) namely the teacher, the learner and the curriculum, that can improve quality in education.

This chapter also describes processes that can be embarked on to improve understanding of curriculum implementation and management as well as theories underpinning these processes. In addition to this, reflective classroom research as a means to enhance curriculum implementation is discussed. In my research I note that the need for curriculum change has been previously addressed by various concerned parties for example, Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) and therefore much of my discussion focuses on the issues pertaining to the implementation of the new curriculum. In order to develop a deeper understanding of the research topic I draw on the work of various writers who provide extensive literature and research on the issue of educational change and curriculum development.

#### **2.2 Curriculum implementation**

It is quite evident that the curriculum changes in South Africa following the transition to a new democratic order after 1994 is under rigorous debate. The following actions were taken by the President's Education Initiative launched in 1999.

- It identified some research questions and located these questions within the international education debate on education reform.
- It described the conditions under which teaching and learning take place in many of our disadvantaged schools, and drew attention to the consequences thereof.
- It set out priorities for expanding our knowledge about school reform in South Africa.

- It identified how the government and other role players can assist with capacity building in schools, classrooms and other educational institutions (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999).

Literature reflects on various initiatives and policy documents that have seen the light with South Africa's educational reform. Whilst these policy documents contain many visionary and well-intended ideas, the implementation of these ideas is taking much longer and is more difficult than expected. Jansen (1999:14) raises skepticism regarding the practicality of these ideas:

Taking some of the expected recommendations seriously implies a commitment of political energy and large amounts of resources which I do not believe, at this stage, will be forthcoming.

Writers such as Fullan (1991), Jansen and Christie (1991), Woods, Van Wyk and Mothaka (1998), Bernstein (2000) and Waghid (2001) reflect on the process of educational reform and emphasize the need to remove the huge disparities and backlogs of the past that are still hampering effective educational change and curriculum implementation at many schools.

Of particular interest to me are the writings of Hopkins on School Improvement for Real (2001:34-35). He argues that the complexity of changes in education challenges those involved to make huge shifts in order for impact to be seen at classroom level. The author asserts that curriculum changes cannot be attained if the implementation of policies is not undertaken and understood. Policies provide a structure for taking action but change in education does not basically depend on policies. Educational change involves the realization of policies, the way learners, teachers and learning institutions understand the implementation process and the influence that policies have on the subjects. Curriculum changes which are planned, intended or prescribed in policy are not easy to implement in everyday school contexts and in practice. Fullan (1991:105) echoes Hopkins's views on the importance of the role players who actually implement the curriculum:

Do not assume that your version of what the change should be is the one that should be implemented. On the contrary, assume that one of the main purposes of the process of implementation is to exchange your reality of what should be, through interaction with the implementers and others concerned.

Lack of understanding of what is expected and the mind-set of teachers that struggle to make the essential shifts necessary to practice changes can constrain change. We need to bear in

mind that the pace and complexity by which change is introduced can at times be overwhelming. A major challenge would be to make the links between theory and practice. Most of the literature notes that we have grown so accustomed to our traditional ways of dealing with curriculum management that it has become very difficult to make the much-needed shift from the traditional to the transformational way of implementing the curriculum (Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003). According to Lubisi, Parker and Wedekind (1998) this challenge is significant enough to be called a paradigm shift and has led to fear and even antagonism as the teachers grapple with the implications that the shift to the new curriculum requires. Chisholm (2005:196) also reflects on the following changes:

C2005 introduced a new vocabulary that, on the one hand, changed terminology, and, on the other, introduced new concepts as tools for teachers to construct curricula. Teacher became educator, student became learner, subject became learning area, syllabus became learning programme and textbooks became learning support materials.

These are only some of the changes that teachers had to adapt to and forms part of this enormous journey of change and shifts that led up to the institution of the RNCS. Keaton (1998:700) gives resonance to the aforementioned authors' opinions of panic and struggle with change:

Although resistance to productive change may arise from self-centered goals, such as retaining power, or from personal apprehensions, such as fear of change, we should recognize that some of the most formidable obstacles to change lie in the inertia of complex systems themselves.

Insufficient or inadequate support to implement and maintain changes could also be a factor affecting the change process. This could be a result of not having a structure in place and no direction as to why the intended changes are necessary or how it could be attained. An additional challenge would be the ability to work together and collaborate in spite of differences in order for change to be effective and the curriculum managed effectively in the whole school.

The Report of the Review Committee on C2005 states that two kinds of knowledge demarcations are included in any curriculum (DoE, 2000:40). Lateral demarcation refers to the boundaries between one learning area and the other learning areas in a learning programme and between a learning area and informal, everyday knowledge, which is

sometimes acquired by integration of curriculum matter. Vertical demarcation on the other hand determines the content knowledge to be obtained within a learning area, which is a result of sequencing, pacing and progression of activities to allow for conceptual coherence and development of learner abilities and achievement.

The principle of integration allows for integration of content within learning areas, across learning areas as well as integration of knowledge and skills to informal contexts outside of the classroom. Thus, the principle of integration relates to lateral demarcation. Progression relates to vertical demarcation as described in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 as it allows for gradual mastering of skills and knowledge which learners are exposed to as teaching and learning progresses. This report reflects on concepts and skills that must be organized in a sequential way to facilitate cognitive development, (DoE, 2000:40).

It appears as if lateral and vertical demarcation of knowledge as demonstrated by the Review Committee could be directly related to Bernstein's "vertical and horizontal discourse" (Bernstein, 2000:169-170). According to Bernstein horizontal reasoning leads to formal knowledge which is in turn acquired through vertical discourse. Horizontal exchange therefore serves as experiential basis for formal knowledge. The RNCS requires teachers who are equipped to understand what type of common, everyday knowledge learners must be engaged in to make the content of the learning areas more explicit. Context must be created whereby learners can engage in meaningful activities which lead to understanding of specialized, focused knowledge.

Integration across learning outcomes and across learning areas facilitates the understanding of different content knowledge across the curriculum (DoE, 2002:12). The assessment standards also show progression across the learning outcomes of the different learning areas of each grade in the Foundation Phase. This study looks at the aspects of integration and progression and how it is applied with the implementation of the curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

The many different interpretations of curriculum implementation did not make it easier for all teachers to have a common understanding of the curriculum and indeed these different and sometimes radical differences have led to diverse ways of interpretation, implementation and

management amongst teachers at schools. Even teachers teaching at the same school may have differences in curriculum understanding and implementation.

Ultimately many debates, reflections and criticisms have led to the adoption of the RNCS. The RNCS is a directive that was taken after the Report of the Review Committee on C2005. This report emphasized teacher support and adequate teacher development through the consolidation, realignment and reorganization of curriculum framework (DoE, 2000:23). In Chapter Four of the report (DoE, 2000:61) attention is drawn to the fact that teachers are left on their own to implement curriculum changes with no adequate support to see such changes through: “There are no support structures in place to help teachers deal with the pressures of curriculum implementation”. Teachers must receive support so that they are able to link the theory of the curriculum policy to the practice in the classroom. The demands of aspects like integration, progression and understanding what is required to assist learners to demonstrate the assessment standards are areas of implementation that teachers need assistance with.

The policy that proposes how the curriculum should be set out and conducted in schools informs teachers and managers of the curriculum as to what is expected. The challenge is to understand what learners need to learn and how to teach so that they are able to demonstrate the outcomes. One of the Assessment Standards for Learning Outcome 3 of Mathematics for Grade 2 in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS, 2002) for example, states that learners should be able to “Describe, sort and compare two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects in pictures and the environment”. What does this imply for the classroom and how do teachers ensure that learners comply with the Assessment Standards as set out for the various Learning Outcomes of each learning area? It is a challenge to make meaningful connections between the theory and the practice in the classroom.

It is needless to say that the implementation of the new curriculum depends and relies heavily on what teachers do in their classrooms to enhance teaching and learning. The curriculum is only effectively translated into the classroom when the curriculum theory is successfully managed and practised in the classroom so that effective teaching and learning take place. According to Fullan (2001:70) efforts to change policy and curriculum focus on developing products, law-making and amendments on paper without consideration of the vital truth that people’s actions and non-actions are the most important factors in the change process.

I was prompted by recommendations in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 (DoE, 2000) to investigate to what extent teachers are coping with the implementation of the RNCS. The Review Committee recommended that the curriculum needed to be strengthened by streamlining its design features, simplifying its language, aligning curriculum and assessment and improving teacher orientation and training, learner support materials and provincial support. A Revised National Curriculum Statement should deal with what the curriculum requirements are at various levels and phases and give a clear description of the kind of learner which is expected at the end of the General Education and Training (GET) band in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (DoE, 2000).

The implementation of the RNCS is influenced by varying contexts at schools and the very differences in the understanding of what constitutes curriculum and the implementation thereof have led to the differences in implementation and how the curriculum theory is related to the classroom practice. All classroom practitioners do not understand the curriculum in a similar way, which leads to disparities in implementation at schools. It is also clear that the transition to the new curriculum is not yet characterized by effective enough translation into classroom practice. Any educational change strategy is doomed to failure if those who need to make these changes happen at schools do not understand what is expected of them or do not own the process.

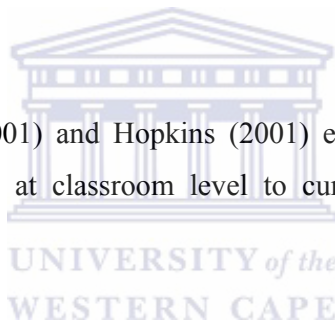
The implementation of the new curriculum is influenced by the intended curriculum and by the teaching practices, classroom environments and management, learning materials in the form of activities, resource kits, teachers' culture, beliefs and attitudes, school organization, assessment practices and expectations, etc. What is intended is not necessarily attained in classrooms. The new curriculum challenges classroom practitioners to adopt a problem-solving ethos with regard to challenges that arise and in respect of strategies that they apply in an attempt to manage the curriculum effectively. Carl (1995:150) describes the problem-solving model as a process that can be used in curriculum management and development. I find this process highly relevant because it starts from the teacher and classroom that serves as a basis in this problem-solving process. Such a process is embarked on after needs have been identified in order to adopt the necessary strategies to address such needs.

This process involves the following:

Needs ► Problem statement ► Problem analysis ► Possible solutions ► Application.

This problem-solving model differs fundamentally from the research development diffusion model which Havelock (1982) proposed. This model of Havelock could also be referred to as a top-down model which resembles what we have been subjected to in South Africa for so long. The education departments made all the decisions and these decisions were then applied as policy with very little input and in many instances no input from teachers and other stakeholders who could contribute to educational debate. This top down approach was challenged on numerous occasions by teacher unions and resulted in rebellion from teachers who were entrusted with the implementation of policy forced on them without relevant consultation. Now that we have moved quite a few years down the line and our needs differ fundamentally a problem solving process which allows for reflection and re-alignment of goals and ideas would be much more functional to curriculum management and implementation.

Researchers such as Fullan (2001) and Hopkins (2001) emphasize the importance of the contribution the teacher makes at classroom level to curriculum implementation. Fullan (1990:18) declares that:



Sustained, cumulative improvements at the classroom and school level, by each and every teacher in the school, are required to meet the challenge of our collective vision of the potential of schools.

The emphasis should be on a collective vision or a shared vision, which teachers adopt and make meaningful for themselves. It is a collective product and something which all role-players at a school buy into.

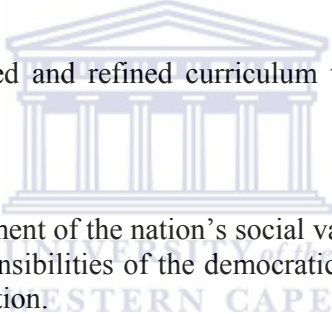
Taylor (2003) and Jansen (2001) comment on the fact that C2005 and any curriculum for that matter can and should not be implemented hastily and in one huge step which teachers cannot cope with all at once. It has become clear that any curriculum change should take into account not only the different role players, which include teachers and learners, but should also have effective support structures in place that can assist with these expected changes. The Report of the Review on C2005 (DoE, 2000:23) states: “In order to strengthen support for teachers in classrooms, it is necessary to consolidate, realign and reorganize curriculum structures.”

Current in-service teacher training, in the form of short workshop interventions, is underpinned by what is described in the literature as a ‘restricted’ view of professionalism, that is, a ‘skilled technician’ trained to deliver the state’s prescribed curriculum (Wilmot, 2005:69). Soudien (2003:273) argues that the social conditions in which teachers find themselves are crucial for the self-understanding they acquire. Teachers have a crucial and trying role to play in the management of the new curriculum.

Not much literature besides the policy documents of the Education Department is available on the requirements of the RNCS. The guidelines put forward in these documents with regard to planning, assessment, outcomes and the design of learning programmes are some of the key factors, which to a large extent, direct this research.

### **2.3 The Revised National Curriculum Statement**

The RNCS is a complete revised and refined curriculum that was instituted to streamline C2005 (DOE, 2002: 5):



The RNCS is an embodiment of the nation’s social values, and its expectations of roles, rights and responsibilities of the democratic South African citizen as expressed in the Constitution.

This new curriculum is aimed at developing the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. The RNCS (2002) sets standards in the learning areas and specifies the minimum knowledge and skills to be achieved by learners in each grade. In this way, the RNCS provides direction on how to develop a high level of skills and knowledge in all learners. The RNCS aims for clear and accessible design and use of language. The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards are two design features that clearly describe the goals and outcomes each learner needs to achieve in order to proceed to each successive level of the system. Within each learning area, the RNCS sets out progressively more complex, deeper and broader knowledge, skills and attitudes for learners to acquire from grade to grade.

In the Overview document of the RNCS (2002) progression and integration are defined as integral parts of Outcomes Based Assessment. Progression is also a key feature of the revised curriculum. Similarly integration plays a significant part in the RNCS. Integration



supports and expands learners' opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and values, and acquire knowledge across the curriculum. In my work with teachers in primary schools I have observed a clear lack of well planned integration that supports teaching and learning.

It is for this reason that I emphasize in Section 1.7 (Research hypotheses) that teachers are not yet applying integration and progression competently. Various authors such as Tomlinson and McTighe (2001), Tanner and Tanner (1995), Lubisi, Parker and Wedekind (1998) and Gillard (2001) reflect on curriculum integration and subsequently all of them recognize the fact that curriculum planning falls short of meaningful planned integration. From the literature it is clear that integration should firstly be well planned and have intentions that assist with the enhancing of both teaching and learning

The following are key features in the curriculum:

#### **(a) Outcomes-based Education**

The philosophy of outcomes-based education (OBE) remains the foundation of our curriculum. Outcomes-based education starts by designing the outcomes to be achieved by the end of the educational process. The outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and values learners should acquire and demonstrate during the learning experience. The RNCS (DoE, 2002:10) describes outcomes-based education as “a process and achievement-oriented activity-based and learner-centered education process”. In following this approach, Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 aim to encourage lifelong learning (DOE, 2002).

#### **(b) Foundation Phase**

This is the first of three phases of the General Education and Training Band and involves grades from Grade R (pre-school learners in the reception year included in the mainstream of the school programme) to Grade 3. It focuses on primary skills, knowledge and values and in so doing lays the foundation for further learning in the Intermediate and Senior Phases of the GET-band.

### **(c) Integration**

Integration ensures that learners experience the learning areas as connected and related by making links within and across learning areas. Teachers have to for instance identify the language components in Numeracy and Life Skills and use those in a manner that promote integration across the learning areas that will complement learning. Integration reinforces and expands learners' opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and values, and attain knowledge across the curriculum. Integrated knowledge development should provide opportunities to benefit teaching and learning and ultimately lead to improvement of learner performance (DoE, 2002:13).

### **(d) Progression**

The curriculum allows for learning to be set out progressively so that it becomes more complex, deeper and broader as the learners proceed within a particular grade and from one grade to another. Conceptual knowledge progression within and across grades is central to the curriculum (DoE, 2002:13). It is a challenge for teachers to ensure coherent and well practised progression as learners develop at different levels in grades across the Foundation Phase. The achievement of an optimal relationship between integration across learning areas and conceptual progression from grade to grade are central to the curriculum, (DoE 2003:13).

The learner's progression through the educational system raises four fundamental questions:

- What learning, basic skills and competencies do learners bring to the next grade and are they ready to engage with the new curriculum map?
- What diagnostic measuring instruments are available to measure the learner's readiness for the new curriculum map?
- To what extent does the new curriculum map take conceptual deficits into consideration?
- What are the consequences for the teaching and learning of learning areas if the skill deficits in learners are not addressed?

### **(e) Learning Outcomes**

The RNCS consists of an Overview Document and a Learning Area Statement for each learning area. Each Learning Area Statement specifies the outcomes for a particular learning

area, from Grade R to Grade 9. The RNCS Overview (2002:14) defines Learning Outcomes as follows:

Each Learning Area has its own set of Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes were designed down from the Critical and Developmental Outcomes. The Learning Outcomes give a specific focus to knowledge, skills and values for each Learning Area that learners should achieve by the end of the General Education and Training Band, making them clear and understandable.

#### **(f) Assessment Standards**

The policy states that Assessment Standards describe the minimum level, depth and breadth of what learners should demonstrate in their achievement of each Learning Outcome. The Assessment Standards embody the knowledge, skills and values required for learners to achieve Learning Outcomes for each grade and do not prescribe methods. Assessment is performed against the Assessment Standards for a particular grade. Therefore, they are a key feature for the progression of learners from grade to grade (DoE, 2002:14).

#### **(g) Critical and Developmental Outcomes**

The Critical and Developmental Outcomes are a list of outcomes inspired by the Constitution. They describe the kind of citizen that is envisaged to emerge from the education and training system and underpin all teaching and learning processes (DOE, 2002:11).

Learning Programmes specify the scope of learning and assessment activities for each phase. Learning Programmes include work schedules providing the pace and sequence of activities each year, as well as exemplars of lesson plans to be implemented in any given period (DOE, 2002:15).

These key features of the curriculum need to be incorporated in planning, assessment, teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase classroom. Teachers have to understand these aspects in order to implement the curriculum according to policy and to assist learners to be able to demonstrate the outcomes of each learning area. The Revised National Curriculum Statement still follows the principles, purpose and thrust of C2005. Here is a brief overview of things that have changed.

- The RNCS has three curriculum design features (i.e. Critical and Developmental Outcomes, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards). Curriculum 2005 had eight curriculum design features (i.e. Critical and Developmental Outcomes, Specific Outcomes, Range Statements, Assessment Criteria, Performance Indicators, Phase Organizers, Programme Organizers and Expected Levels of Performance).
- In the RNCS Learning Outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and values that learners should achieve and Assessment Standards indicate what learners must be able to demonstrate within each Learning Outcome.
- Assessment Standards are grade specific, showing what is expected of learners in each grade and how conceptual progression will occur in each learning area.
- Integration of knowledge, skills and values occurs within and across learning areas, and is balanced with conceptual progression from grade to grade within a learning area.
- Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the reception year (Grade R) are specified in the curriculum.
- At the Foundation Phase level, the learning areas are presented through the same learning programmes as before, these being Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills.

The Critical Outcomes specify core life skills that learners should develop such as communication, critical thinking, activity and information management, group and community work. The Critical Outcomes envisage learners who will be able to (DOE, 2002:11):

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
- Organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and

- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The Developmental Outcomes envisage learners who are also able to (DOE, 2002:11):

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts; and
- Explore education and career opportunities and develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

The following table provides a comparison of the main features of C2005 and the RNCS that was revised, and are being implemented to date.

**Table 1: Curriculum Features of C2005 and the RNCS**

<b>Curriculum 2005</b>	<b>Revised National Curriculum</b>
C005 provides for the development of the following curriculum design tools: Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Learning Areas (LA)</li> <li>• Specific Outcomes (SO)</li> <li>• Range Statements (RS)</li> <li>• Assessment Criteria (AC)</li> <li>• Performance Indicators (PI)</li> <li>• Continuous Assessment, Recording and Reporting</li> </ul> Additional curriculum design tools included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase Organizers (PO)</li> <li>• Programme Organizers (PO)</li> <li>• Expected levels of Performance (ELP)</li> <li>• Learning Programmes</li> </ul> Support Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interim Syllabi</li> <li>• WCED Benchmarks</li> </ul>	Review Committee recommended streamlining design features and simplifying the language. The RNCS stipulates the knowledge (concepts), skills and values by grade. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Outcomes (CO)</li> <li>• 8 Learning Areas (LA)</li> <li>• Learning Outcomes (LO)</li> <li>• Assessment Standards (AS)</li> <li>• Continuous Assessment, Recording and Reporting</li> </ul> The Revised National Curriculum Statements will be implemented by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Programmes</li> <li>• Work schedules</li> <li>• Lesson plans</li> </ul> Support Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment Guidelines for the General Education and Training Band</li> <li>• Guidelines for the development of learning programmes.</li> <li>• Literacy &amp; Numeracy strategy of the WCED</li> <li>• Foundations for Learning Campaign</li> </ul>

The RNCS (DoE, 2002:20) also states that “In a multilingual country like South Africa, it is important that learners reach high levels of proficiency in at least two languages and that they are able to communicate in other languages”. Across all the learning areas, the RNCS strongly recommends that learners' home languages should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase where children learn to read and write and yet schools find it difficult to accommodate learners of different cultures in classes where home language is used as the medium of instruction. When learners have to make a switch from their home language to an additional language for learning and teaching, careful planning is necessary and the RNCS policies on Languages and Language Learning in the Teacher’s Guide for Development of Learning Programmes (DoE, 2003:21) state that:

- The first additional language could be introduced in Grade R;
- The home language should continue to be used in conjunction with the additional language for as long as possible; and
- When learners attend a school where the language of learning and teaching is not their home language, teachers need to ensure that support and further teaching of the additional language is provided until such time as the learner is able to learn efficiently in the language of learning and teaching.

According to the RNCS Overview (2002:18) assessment is still a continuous planned process of gathering information on learner achievement as it was in C2005. It is based on the principles of outcomes-based education.

The Assessment Principles used in Outcomes-based Assessment (DoE, 2003:5) state that assessment should be:

- Transparent and clearly focused;
- Integrated with teaching and learning;
- Based on predetermined criteria or standards;
- Varied in terms of methods and contexts; and
- Valid, reliable, fair, learner-paced, and flexible enough to allow for expanded opportunities.

The RNCS assists with the process of learner assessment by placing Assessment Standards at the heart of the assessment process in every grade. The Assessment Standards describe the level at which learners in each grade should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes and the ways (depth and breadth) of demonstrating their achievement. This means that the teacher has a clear understanding of exactly what needs to be assessed for each learner in each grade in terms of knowledge, content and skills.

The Assessment Policy (DoE, 2007:8) also describes continuous assessment as a model of assessment that “encourages integration of assessment into teaching and the development of learners through ongoing feedback”. As in C2005, continuous assessment is the chief method by which assessment takes place in the revised curriculum. Assessment in the RNCS highlights the following points about continuous assessment (WCED, 2003:7):

- Learners as active participants in learning and assessment are assessed regularly and records of learners' progress are updated throughout the year;
- Feedback is given to learners by appropriate questioning, oral and written comments that focus on what was intended to be achieved by an assessment activity, and encouragement to learners;
- Integrated assessment includes assessing a number of related learning outcomes within a single activity or providing a variety of assessment methods and opportunities through which learners can demonstrate their abilities;
- Assessment strategies cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural); and
- Summative assessment is planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies.

Curriculum policy (WCED, 2003:8) states that the main purpose of assessment should be to enhance individual growth and development, to monitor the progress of learners and to facilitate learning. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards of the Learning Areas form the backbone of assessment. Assessment tasks must be designed so that it can inform teaching. Good assessment should emulate good teaching practices and reinforce good instruction. Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Assessment is used in the following ways (DoE, 2007:9):

- Baseline assessment of prior learning takes place at the beginning of a grade or phase and establishes what learners already know. It assists in planning learning programmes and learning activities.
- Diagnostic assessment is used to find out the nature and cause of barriers to learning that specific learners might be experiencing. Guidance, support and appropriate interventions follow such assessment as the need arises.
- Formative assessment is used to inform learners and teachers about learners' progress so as to improve learning. Constructive feedback is given.
- Summative assessment gives an overall picture of learners' progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a term or year or on transfer to another school.
- Systemic assessment is the monitoring of the performance of the education system overall. It is based on a representative sample of schools and learners selected provincially or nationally.

The choice of assessment strategies is decided by the teacher and will be unique to each teacher, grade and school. Factors such as space and resources available may influence the decision a teacher makes. However, even when resources are similar, teachers may make different choices. The methods chosen for assessing activities must be appropriate for the assessment standards to be assessed. The purpose of assessment must be clearly understood by all learners and teachers involved. Competence can be demonstrated in a number of ways and thus a variety of methods need to be provided for learners to demonstrate their abilities more fully (DoE, 2007:10).

The school assessment programme should provide the details of what records must be kept and how these records must be kept. Record keeping should include a record book or file, progression schedules and learner profile. Each teacher should keep an up-to-date record book or file. This would include information such as learners' names, dates of assessment, name and description of assessment activities, the results of assessment activities according to learning areas or learning programmes and comments for support purposes. This type of record keeping would be used throughout the year for all aspects of continuous assessment. A portfolio is a method of keeping a record of learners' work in a file or box. It gives the learner and teacher the opportunity to consider a number of assessment activities together. Learners would keep written work or records of practical exercises and should be personally responsible for maintaining their portfolios. It should be something special to them and at the



end of the year they can take it home to show their parents. However, as from 2010 learner portfolios may no longer be required as part of the assessment procedures. A learner profile must be kept for each learner. This is a continuous record of information that should accompany learners throughout their school careers. It should give an all-round impression of a learner's progress, including the holistic development of values, attitudes and social development.

The Assessment Policy (WCED, 2003:11) clarifies that different assessment codes can be used. It goes on to recommend that whatever assessment code is used, feedback is more effective when it is combined with comments. A number of different assessment codes are listed in the Assessment Policy documents of the Western Cape Education Department. The national assessment codes that the policy document (WCED, 2003:11) identifies are:

- 4 = Learner's performance has exceeded the requirements of the learning outcome;
- 3 = Learner's performance has satisfied the requirements of the learning outcome;
- 2 = Learner's performance has partially satisfied the requirements of the learning outcome and
- 1 = Learner's performance has not satisfied the requirements of the learning outcome.

The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for Schools in the General Education and Training Band (GET) (DoE, 2005:5) defines assessment as a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of learners. The process of assessment involves:

- Generation and collection of evidence of achievement;
- Evaluation of evidence against outcomes;
- Recording of findings of the evaluation; and
- Using this information to understand and thereby assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching.

#### **2.4 Aspects of the curriculum that should be managed at classroom level.**

I believe that the following aspects of the curriculum should be taken into account as they impact on the management and implementation of the curriculum at classroom level.

- Learning programmes should be planned for the various learning areas, taking into account the learning outcomes and assessment standards set out in the new

curriculum. This requires that work schedules, that show how teaching, learning and assessment will be sequenced and paced in the classroom, be instituted.

- Lessons should be planned and relevant resources must be used to aid with the implementation of the curriculum.
- A learner-centered classroom that supports curriculum management and that is conducive for the improvement of classroom organization and management should be created.
- Learners' performance must be assessed, recorded and reported on.
- Observation, reflection and adaptation of teaching and learning methods and strategies to improve curriculum implementation should take place.

The various aspects of the curriculum that must be managed at classroom level can be categorized as: physical infrastructure, resources, human resources and teaching and learning. The teacher must always be conscious of the greater scheme of things and relative importance of each aspect of the classroom that must be managed well as every aspect contributes to the development of teaching and learning in their school. Successful management of the curriculum at classroom level requires the effective organization and control of every aspect of the classroom and those who use it. Getting students involved in meaningful, purposeful activities requires a number of significant changes in the physical setting, in events and activities, and in the nature and quality of interactions in the classroom is needed in order to get students involved in relevant and focused activities. The significant contribution that is made at classroom level cannot be overlooked and it is the interactions of teacher and learner that influence many learners to become responsible citizens or not. The future of the world is shaped in the classroom to a great extent.

The revised curriculum builds on the vision and values of the Constitution and Curriculum 2005. The values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act, 108 / 1996) provide a good basis for curriculum transformation and educational development in South Africa. The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development but also to ensure that a national South African identity is build on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education.

At this point it is important to consider the five principles that the curriculum is based on (DoE, 2002). These principles require that the teacher implements specific things at classroom level. These principles include:

**(a) Social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity**

Learning area statements in the RNCS reflect the principles and practices of social justice, and respect for the environment and human rights, as defined in the Constitution. In particular, the curriculum attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and such challenges as HIV/AIDS (DoE, 2002:10).

**(b) Outcomes-based education**

The philosophy of outcomes-based education remains the foundation of our curriculum. Outcomes-based education starts by designing the outcomes to be achieved by the end of the educational process. The outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and values learners should acquire and demonstrate during the learning experience. The RNCS describes outcomes-based education as an “achievement-oriented activity-based and learner-centered education process that aims to encourage lifelong learning” (DoE, 2002:11).

**(c) A high level of skills and knowledge for all**

The RNCS sets high expectations of what South African learners can achieve and aims at the development of a high level of knowledge and skills for all. Social justice requires that those sections of the population previously disempowered by the lack of knowledge and skills should now be empowered. The RNCS sets standards in the learning areas and specifies the minimum knowledge and skills to be achieved by learners in each grade. In this way, the RNCS provides direction on how to develop a high level of skills and knowledge in all learners (DoE, 2002:12).

**(d) Clarity and accessibility**

The RNCS aims for clear and accessible design and use of language. The learning outcomes and assessment standards are two design features that clearly describe the goals and outcomes each learner needs to achieve in order to proceed to each successive level of the system. The RNCS is available in all official languages and in Braille (DoE, 2002:12).

**(e) Progression and Integration**

The RNCS strives to achieve an optimal relationship between integration across the learning areas of the curriculum as well as conceptual progression from grade to grade across the phases in a school (DoE, 2002:13).

The table on the next two pages highlights a few of the factors that I am extracting in an attempt to emphasize the complexity of the implementation of the new curriculum at schools. These principles place huge demands on the teachers and have far reaching implications on teaching and learning.

**Table 2: Principles of the RNCS**

<b>Principle 1</b>	<b>This implies that:</b>	<b>Implications for teachers</b>
Social justice	Caring for one another. The needs of all individuals and societies should be met within the constraints imposed by the biosphere.	To ensure social justice, learners' human rights in society should be recognized and respected.
Human rights	Human rights and their infringement are grounded in the daily experiences of people within their local environments.	Every human being has some fundamental or basic rights. Learner should realize that rights are tied to obligations or duties on their part.
Healthy environment	Everyone has a right to an environment that is not harmful to his or her health or well being.	Learners have a right to a clean and safe environment and to act to protect such environment.
Inclusivity	The SA education system has recognized the need for special commitment on inclusivity in education (White Paper 6 on Special needs in Education, 2001).	Special educational, social, emotional and physical needs of learners should be addressed in the design & development of Learning Programmes.
<b>Principle 2</b> Clarity of focus	Teachers need to have a clear focus on what they want their learners to achieve and to keep that focus during classroom practice.	Teachers must bear in mind that the clarity of focus is informed by the learners' characteristics and needs as well as the critical and developmental outcomes, the global and local realities including diversity and language issues.
Expanded opportunity	The new curriculum aims to stimulate the minds of learners to ensure full participation in economic and social life.	Some learners may need exposure to more than one learning opportunity. Classroom methodology should take into account different learning styles, presenting and enriching the curriculum in different ways.

Design down	The learning outcomes are derived from the critical and developmental outcomes and enable a broader vision of the curriculum.	The outcomes and assessment standards emphasize participatory, learner-centered and activity based education
<b>Principle 3</b> High level of skills and knowledge for all	The RNCS sets and holds high expectations of what learners should achieve.	The RNCS specifies the combination of minimum knowledge and skills to be achieved by learners in each grade, and sets high achievable standards in all the Learning Areas.
<b>Principle 4</b> Clarity and accessibility	The RNCS aims at clarity and accessibility both in design and language.	Two design features, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards clearly define for all learners the goals and outcomes necessary to progress.
<b>Principle 5</b> Progression and Integration	The principle of integrated learning is integral to OBE and the new curriculum. The curriculum sets out progressively more complex, deeper and broader expectations for learners and it should therefore reflect conceptual progression.	Links should be made within and across Learning Areas. Teachers should support and expand learning opportunities to attain skills , acquire knowledge and develop attitudes and values encompassed across the curriculum

(Adapted by Z Jooste from the Participants Guide for Foundation Phase Teachers, RNC 2003 Overview).



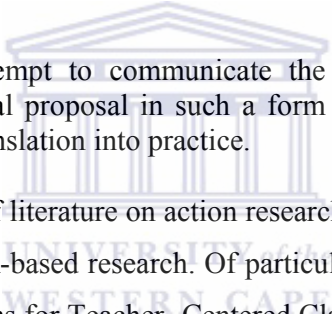
## 2.5 Reflective classroom research and curriculum implementation

Policy requires from teachers an extended view of professionalism which involves locating one's work in a broader context; comparing and collaboration with other teachers; systematic evaluation, and commitment to improvement on the basis of research and development (Mattson & Harley, 2003:286). Reflective classroom research can be used effectively to monitor curriculum implementation and management. Trying out and reflecting on ideas in practice can be utilized as a means to increase knowledge about such practice and also to improve teaching and learning. In this respect action research might prove to be useful. This involves a cyclical approach which enables the teacher /researcher to improve his/her practice in an ongoing and conscious manner through applying different strategies to enhance teaching and learning at classroom and school level.

In order for curriculum management to be effective and relevant, teachers need to see that after reflection during action research changes that they make to teaching affects learning

positively. The change in learners' learning and the positive effects on teaching stimulates teachers and assists them with the implementation of the curriculum. According to Calhoun (1994) action research is a fancy way of saying, let us study what is happening at our school and decide how to make it a better place. A relevant professional development plan that supports teacher change and enlists the key issues relating to enhancing teaching and learning should be provided. Such a development plan with reflective action research as its primary objective should entail changes in the classroom practice of teachers, that bring about changes in the learning of learners and in turn changes in the attitudes of teachers.

Classroom practitioners are also not allowed opportunity to engage in reflection of the curriculum in order to critically analyze implementation strategies and to adapt according to the needs of learners in the classroom. Stenhouse (1975:4) alludes to this practice when he states:



A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and effective translation into practice.

I have also consulted a variety of literature on action research and specifically work that dealt with teacher-centered, classroom-based research. Of particular interest to me was the writing of Doerr and Tinton on Paradigms for Teacher-Centered Classroom-Based Research (2000). The role of teachers as researchers and the role of the teacher and researchers are qualified in terms of the type of research which is engaged with. Action research often has as its goal the transformation of practice (Noffke & Stevenson, 1995; Doerr & Tinton, 2000). Such action research involves teacher research or enquiry aiming at creating knowledge and improving practice. It can also be viewed as a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is personally owned and conducted.

The following should be taken into account:

- The teachers must have a clear and focused idea of what he or she wants to find out or investigate. It is necessary to have a question to explore.
- A clear understanding of the context and issues will be needed.
- An honest account of the teacher's values, beliefs and attitudes which inform the understanding of practices is needed when embarking on an action research project.

- The teachers who participate in the research should be willing to question their own values, beliefs and practices.

Classroom research is fundamentally a form of strategic action aimed directly at improving a particular social practice such as teaching (Hopkins, 1985: 56 and McNiff, 1988:3). Mostly any type of classroom action research is designed and conducted by practitioners who analyze and study the results obtained from such research in order to improve their own practice. Understanding what has been researched allows for informed change and at the same time it is informed by that change. Reflection through an action research process involves critical investigation of experiences for determining new levels of understanding and possible actions. The consistent interaction between thinking and action can deepen understanding as well as bring change in teaching practice.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Moving away from the old way of curriculum dissemination to the new is one of the biggest challenges teachers face. Hopkins (2001:35) argues that the complexity of changes in education challenges those involved to make huge shifts in order for an impact to be seen at classroom level. No teacher who is serious about implementing the new curriculum to the best of his or her ability can reach the desired goals of the curriculum as set out in the discussion on the RNCS in this chapter without making some changes to their practices at classroom level. A major shift in teaching and learning is required if we want to cross the Rubicon of C2005 to the RNCS. In order to achieve the objectives of the learning areas as described in policy (DOE, 2002) the practice in the classroom will have to be aligned with the theory of the policy.

The next chapter describes the research design used in the investigation as well as the data that was collected through qualitative research instruments that included teacher profiles, observations, as well as questionnaires and interviewing. Chapter 3 also describes the use of a qualitative methodological paradigm and how the interpretive meta-theoretical approach broadened the researcher's understanding of how the Foundation Phase teachers were implementing the curriculum. The researcher also describes participatory action research as research design with the focus on how such research would assist the researcher to adapt her own practices in order to support the teachers with whom she work

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The main aim of the research is to show how the Revised National Curriculum is implemented in the Foundation Phase, how the theory of the RNCS policy relates to what is accomplished in the classroom and how the findings inform my own practice of teacher support and development. In the previous chapter I discuss how curriculum implementation and the recommendations after the review of C2005 that led to the adoption of the RNCS are understood in literature. The RNCS provides clear guidelines as to what the curriculum is that needs to be implemented in the Foundation Phase. This curriculum should be effectively interpreted and understood with regard to the specific features that distinguish it from C2005.

In this chapter I describe the qualitative methodological paradigm within which the research took place, the interpretive meta-theoretical approach and the participatory action research design that is followed. I also provide further details about the sample, setting and instruments that were used to collect the data. I elaborate on the meticulously planned data gathering tools which consist of teacher profiles, questionnaires, observations and interviews.

Data collection tools were carefully selected, adapted or designed to support the research objectives which involve the establishment of how curriculum implementation progresses in the Foundation Phase and what actions could be taken by the researcher as practitioner working with teachers in schools. I further provide insight into the process of data collection involving the implementation of the RNCS by Foundation Phase teachers.

In this chapter I elaborate on the research sample and the context in which the research was performed which involved the principal and teachers in a primary school in the rural area of the Overberg in consultation with the relevant Western Cape Education Department officials. The school has seven Foundation Phase teachers from which five willingly participated. The school uses Afrikaans as medium of instruction and have pupils enrolled of different language and cultural backgrounds. I have chosen this school because I have a good working relationship with the staff and have previously worked with some of the teachers in another development project.



I address the ethical issues in the research process in this chapter. The willing participants at the school were taken on board from the outset and were informed about the aims and objectives of the research. Each and every individual participating in this study gave their consent after being briefed about the research. The right to privacy and confidentiality as well as the protection of identities and interests of those involved were maintained at all times. The teachers were respected and treated professionally at all times and their input valued as such. Fictitious names are used when referring to the school or any of the staff members or learners.

The focus in this chapter is also on the orientation and design of the research in the study. The application of a qualitative methodological paradigm allows for interaction with the teachers in order to make sense of, understand and describe their experiences with the implementation of the RNCS. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe the purpose of a qualitative paradigm as description and sense making of situations and actions using various viewpoints. The application of an interpretive theoretical approach allows for interpretation and understanding of the implementation of the curriculum and the contribution it makes to assist Foundation Phase teachers in the transformation of practices. The action research design on the other hand assists with the identification of problems teachers experience with the implementation of the RNCS in order to adapt my own practice in working with teachers in schools.

### **3.2 A qualitative methodological paradigm**

‘Paradigm’ is a Greek word which refers to the way in which we understand and interpret the world we live in. It depends on many diverse factors related to our education, culture and beliefs. When deciding on a paradigm within which to work our choice is directed by our understanding of the nature of the world. Schwandt (1997:108) describes a paradigm as a type of cognitive framework used by a specific community of scientists to generate and to solve puzzles in their field.

This research was conducted within a qualitative methodological paradigm. Qualitative research focuses on the participants’ perceptions and experiences (Creswell, 1994:162). Qualitative research, also known as post-positivist research, draws on experience and understanding and it gives the researcher the opportunity to interact with the individuals

around their experiences and understandings of certain phenomena. This approach may involve action research to investigate the social position of subjects in a collaborative manner through observation and interviews. In contrast to the above-mentioned approaches, a quantitative or positivist research study focuses on fixed, agreed upon and measurable phenomena. The quantitative paradigm, rooted in the natural sciences, is also called the systemic, scientific, positivist approach whilst an ethnographic, ecological or naturalistic approach relates to a qualitative paradigm (Kumar, 1999:12). Post-positivists believe the world may not be knowable - that it is infinitely more complex and open to interpretation than in the case of a positivist paradigm (O’Leary, 2004:6).

I decided to apply a qualitative methodological paradigm in this study because it provided me with the opportunity to observe the Foundation Phase context to identify the key areas I want to reflect on throughout the study. It also afforded me the chance to critically study the new curriculum in practice and to interpret the teaching of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards prescribed as policy in terms of the meanings teachers bring to it at school and classroom level. I utilized different qualitative techniques and data collection methods in my interaction with research subjects with the objective to describe and make sense of participants’ meaning construction influenced by multiple perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln cited in Schurink, 1998:240).

The qualitative research allowed me to do a study of Foundation Phase teachers within their natural settings at their school site. By so doing I was enabled to clearly understand and describe how teachers are implementing the RNCS (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). Through a qualitative methodological paradigm I was able to obtain information that provides greater insight into the implementation of the curriculum and how educators are experiencing this aspect of schooling in South Africa.

To achieve the aims and objectives of the research I considered the existing theories and recommendations on curriculum implementation. I draw on the guidelines as set out in policy documents for example, Report of the Review Committee on C2005 (DoE, 2000), White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 9 (DoE, 2002).

### 3.3 An interpretive theoretical approach

The theoretical approach that was followed in this research was an interpretive one. This interpretive study could assist in broadening my own understanding of the implementation of the new curriculum by teachers in order to justify the claims that I make in my hypothesis, i.e. that adequate steps are not in place to provide enough follow up support after the initiation of the implementation process. Many teachers are still not clear about the assessment process that needs to be incorporated in their teaching and learning and do not display a common understanding of the Assessment Standards, especially the progression and integration of concepts. The study which is qualitative in nature (Mouton, 2001) sets out to provide a study of how Foundation Phase teachers understand the new curriculum and how it is practised in the classroom. The investigation is aimed at interpreting teachers' application of curriculum policy as set out in the RNCS as well as observing the theory in practice in the different grades of the Foundation Phase. In this interpretive approach the researcher seeks to interact with and observe the cultural and historical contexts of subjects in order to understand how they construct their own realities. This interpretive approach allowed for the construction of multiple meanings of reality that are in a state of flux and can change over time (Merriam & Associates, 2002:3).

I employed the interpretive theoretical approach in order to clearly understand how teachers are coping with the RNCS, what they are experiencing in the classroom and what they are grappling with regarding curriculum implementation. Morrison claims that, "all educational research should be grounded in people's experiences not as facts but as a construct in which people can understand reality in different ways" (in Coleman & Briggs, 2002:18).

To understand teaching and learning and the implications thereof for education, all relevant role players need to reflect on how we support teachers, what is expected of us and what changes we need to make in order to improve our existing practices. This interpretive approach seeks to explain how teachers are implementing the curriculum but also what needs to be done to strengthen curriculum delivery at Foundation Phase level. The formation of a collaborative teacher-researcher team leading to far-reaching changes in relationships as well as knowledge that redefine our practice and improve existing curriculum implementation at the Foundation Phase level could be a positive initiative. Certainly all the problems that exist and the why and how will not be totally addressed by this research only. The research did

however contribute to the interpretation and understanding of existing theories as well as to the provision of scope for teachers to make changes and to empower themselves. I see myself aligned with the Foundation Phase teachers with whom I work closely, as an implementer of the RNCS as well as an establisher of new theory. The researcher's perceptions of how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom and how teachers cope with the implementation of the curriculum has also been shaped by the personal experiences of the researcher as encountered in field work concerned with observation and training of and support to teachers in primary schools. This study enhanced my understanding of the reality of teachers' attempts to change and thus allowed me to review my own practice of curriculum implementation in primary schools.

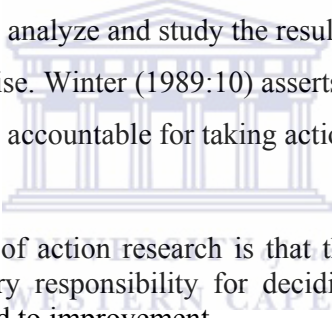
### **3.4 Participatory action research as research design**

As part of the research I embarked on an action research process which is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation into the implementation of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase to inform my understanding of the actual support teachers need. "Action Research is fundamentally a form of strategic action aimed directly at improving a particular social practice such as teaching" (Hopkins, 1985:56). The study is characterized by spiraling circles of problem identification, systemic data collection, reflection, analysis and action. The methodology of action research is applied in the particular context of the Foundation Phase and directed towards actions to be taken by teachers and field workers such as myself in collaboration with other educationists. According to Cochran-Smith if we regard teachers' theories as sets of interrelated conceptual frameworks grounded in practice, teacher researchers are both users and generators of theory (Doer & Tinto, 2002:406). The construction of a collaborative teacher-researcher team with all role players could lead to extensive changes that could redefine our teaching practices and improve existing curriculum implementation endeavors through sharing our experiences and learning regarding theory in practice.

With the research I am not only seeking to understand how teachers are implementing the curriculum but I am also striving to understand their practices in order to adapt my own practice as Education Specialist to improve my methods to support and develop teachers in primary schools.

Action Research can be understood as inquiry or research which is undertaken in a focused manner to improve the quality of a specific area of a practice like teaching. Hopkins (1985: 56) defines the basic nature of action research as intentional action aimed at direct improvement of practice: “Action Research is fundamentally a form of strategic action aimed directly at improving a particular social practice such as teaching”. The application of action research affords me the opportunity to be the researcher in interaction with the implementers of the new curriculum, allowing me to make sense of the process of implementation and also provides me with the opportunity to employ my inferences to contribute to discussions addressing some of the problems that may exist. The research could contribute to the existing theories and provide me with the necessary knowledge and skills to furnish teachers with the scope to transform their practice and thus empowering themselves.

Almost any type of action research is designed and conducted by practitioners who observe, investigate, collect data, analyze and study the results obtained from such research in order to improve their own practise. Winter (1989:10) asserts that people who are expected to implement change in practice are accountable for taking action which will improve practice:



A distinguishing feature of action research is that those affected by planned changes have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of action which seems likely to lead to improvement.

Because of the participatory nature of the research both teachers and researcher could reflect on certain aspects of the curriculum and such reflection could lead to action needed to bring about change and improve teaching and learning in the subjects’ classroom practice and the researcher’s teacher development practice. The process of action research implies trying out ideas resulting from problem identification and understanding the actions taken to address problems so that some attempts can be made to improve or make changes in your classroom, school and in my case, my own practice as education specialist. Reflective research should promote growth. The application of action research afforded me the opportunity to be in interaction with the implementation of the new curriculum and provided me with the chance to contribute to addressing some of the problems that may exist. Understanding the findings of the research allows for informed change in my own practice and at the same time the research is informed by that change.

Action research methods are participatory and self evaluative - the ultimate objective being to improve practice in some way or other (Cohen & Manion, 1994:186). Participatory action research gives rise to new opportunities, to reflect on and to assess our teaching and learning, to explore and test new ideas, methods and materials which could lead to the implementation of new approaches and methodologies. This process also develops a problem solving ethos which is undoubtedly what we need in education with all its demands. The ability of such research to help me with the professional development of teachers and the reflection on what such development should or should not contain is vital to my own practice which focuses on developing teachers through courses, workshops and training to strengthen their practice. The practice of reflective action research could result in a review of current practices to make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning.

Curriculum implementers should be skilled to evaluate what they are engaging in so that they can contribute to transformation and the eradication of problems that hinder effective curriculum implementation. A key factor that motivates my persistence to introduce teachers to the concept of reflective action research is the fact that it can result in educators working in collaboration with one another. Collaboration between and among colleagues is of utmost significance if we want to achieve what we set out to do with any type of research or evaluation which informs our teaching.

In many ways the application of action research awards us excellent opportunities that could be used as a mechanism to incorporate team building and efficiency as a member of a team that strive to work together to achieve a common understanding of a particular topic or problem we face. Sharing feedback with fellow team members and deciding on new approaches together after critical reflection as well as embarking on new approaches is valuable in order to improve your teaching and this is what I encourage.

The ultimate goal of academic research is to generate theories and test hypotheses and thereby creating new knowledge or contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Action research on the other hand often has as its goal the transformation of practice (Nofke & Stevenson, 1995; Doer & Tinto, 2002). This research aims to close or narrow the gap that exists between the theory and the practice of the RNCS. It should also provide opportunities for further teacher development in so far as it could enhance the ability of teachers to

implement the new curriculum and enable them to address problems experienced with the implementation of the new curriculum.

The process of participatory action research involved the following phases:

Phase 1: Planning of the research process which included initial discussions and meetings with the participants who made a significant contribution to this research.

Phase 2: The process of collecting data from teachers through profiles, questionnaires and observations in the classrooms of the Foundation Phase teachers.

Phase 3: Data analysis of data collected from the Foundation Phase teachers.

Phase 4: Reflection on practices of teachers.

Phase 5: Data collection through interviews from Education Specialists.

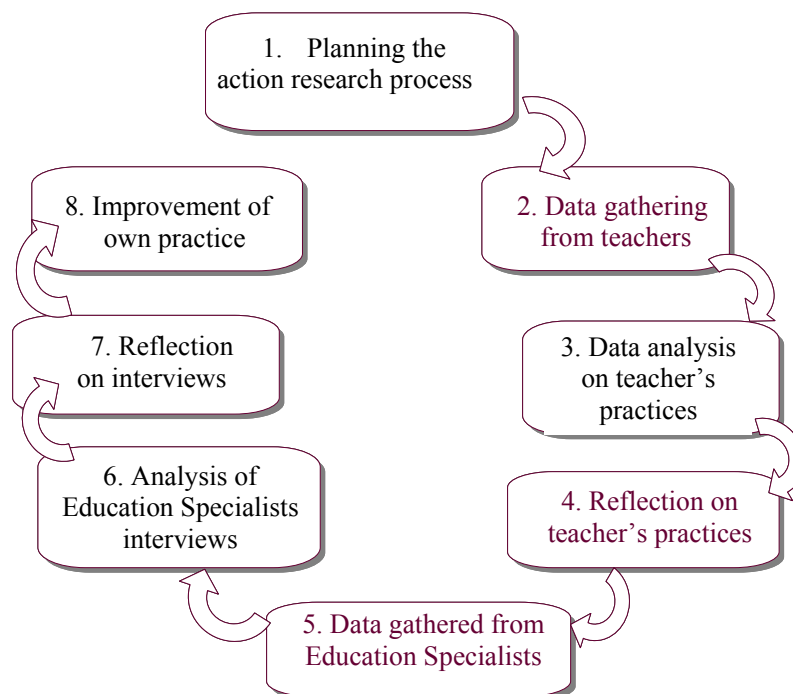
Phase 6: Data analysis of data collected from Education Specialists.

Phase 7: Reflection on interviews with Education Specialist.

Phase 8: Reflection on my own practice and improvement of approaches to existing teacher support and development.

I embarked on a cyclical approach in the participatory action research design which will enable me to improve my practice in an ongoing and conscious manner. The next figure illustrates the action research process that I undertook in order to improve my own practices.

**Figure 1: Action Research Cycle**



One of my subsidiary research questions as indicated in Section 1.5 (Subsidiary research questions) of Chapter 1 focus on how I will be able to improve my own practices. The action research cycle illustrated above provides several steps that will assist me to make the needed changes to the support I give to Foundation Phase teachers.

In the next section when I discuss sampling and research participants I explain how I interacted with the participants in an action research process that involved reflection on my own practices.

### **3.5 Sampling and research participants**

This research focuses on the Foundation Phase which consists of Grades R, 1, 2 and 3. I conducted my research at School X in the Education District of the Overberg that resides under the Western Cape Education Department. School X is a rural school with seven Foundation Phase teachers. I engaged with four teachers teaching in Grade 2 and 3 and with one teacher teaching in Grade 1.

I have chosen this school because I have a good working relationship with the staff and engaged with the teachers in a development project aimed at the management of teaching and learning in the Overberg. When I embarked on performing research with the Foundation Phase teachers at school X, the Grade R teacher expressed confusion about her inclusion as a Foundation Phase teacher. The RNCS (DoE, 2002) depicts the Foundation Phase from Grade R to Grade 3. I did not insist on the teacher's participation and respected her view that she does not regard herself as part of the Foundation Phase stream. This initial discussion in my first formal meeting with the teachers led me to believe that there was a clear misunderstanding with regard to the role of Grade R at the school. Although the school has two classes for Grades 1, 2 and 3 one of the Grade 1 teachers did not feel comfortable to be part of the research and I respected that. This left me with 5 teacher participants across three grades of the Foundation Phase.

After consultation and discussion the teachers were willing to participate and I was grateful because without their participation the study could not have been completed. I gave them each a letter of thanks and confirmation of their willingness to be part of the study. Each of the teachers was tasked to complete a questionnaire. The Foundation Phase Head of



Department was also asked to complete a separate questionnaire in her capacity as HOD. Observations were done in participants' classrooms and field notes gathered on a structured observation form. Observations were completed during the second and third terms of 2008.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with two education specialists who supported Foundation Phase teachers in the field. They were able to share their experience in working with educators as well as their views on the implementation of the RNCS. The two education specialists were very helpful and open to unambiguous discussion of their experience in the field of curriculum implementation and management. Initially I did not plan to do these interviews but as I sorted through the data obtained from the questionnaires and observations a clear need arose to get the views from educationists involved with Foundation Phase teachers at classroom level. Since the study focuses on the implementation of the curriculum which has its base within the classroom my sample of two education specialists took into account subjects who were currently working with Foundation Phase teachers at school, classroom and district level.

Specialist A has been a teacher in the Foundation Phase for twenty two years before she started working in an organisation which collaborates with the WCED in order to assist teachers with teaching and learning at their respective schools. Specialist A has now been working as a Foundation Phase Curriculum Advisor in the Overberg District for the past two years. Specialist B has been teaching in the Foundation Phase for fourteen years, she has been a curriculum advisor for ten years and is now doing field work in the Rural Education Project which works with teachers and schools in three different education districts. These two participants were interviewed separately on two different occasions during the fourth term in 2008.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

I used qualitative research instruments that include teacher profiles, questionnaires, non-participant observation and interviewing. These instruments are described as Appendix C: Teacher Profile, Appendix D: Questionnaire for Foundation Phase Teachers, Appendix E: Observation Schedule, Appendix F: Questionnaire for Foundation Phase HOD and Appendix G: Interview of Education Specialist.

As I interviewed only two education specialists I was able to present the interview questions to them before the actual interview and they were able to provide me with distinct answers to the questions that they had to respond to. The methods used provided a tool for exploring understanding, beliefs and knowledge about the implementation of the RNCS at classroom level. It also gave the two participatory education specialists the opportunity to reflect and respond on practical and theoretical aspects of curriculum implementation.

My reason for using more than one data collection method is for the purpose of triangulation. In 1978 already Denzin referred to methodological triangulation which involves the use of different methods on the same object of research. I also hope that the research would be a true reflection of how the implementation process is proceeding and I thus aim to present reliable findings through the data collected.

The baseline questionnaire that was drawn up consists of questions that are directed to receive initial answers from participating teachers on where they were in respect of the implementation of the RNCS. This was a type of open ended questionnaire.

The instrument contains three parts:

Part 1: Planning

Part 2: Assessment

Part 3: General curriculum issues

The baseline information also requires an initial teacher profile which assisted me in gathering data about my participants and their school setting. The questionnaire and teacher profile were arranged in established categories used for coding and form part of my initial data that I collected right at the outset of my research.

The research also takes into account the recommendations made in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 (DoE, 2000) and therefore wishes to establish whether all the support mechanisms as well as the intended curriculum changes are assisting teachers with the implementation of the RNCS. Some key issues that have been raised by previous researchers and the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 serve as guidelines to my research. Some of the issues include insufficient teacher support, finding a balance between school and everyday knowledge and relations between intended, implemented and attained curriculum,

etc. To achieve the aims and objectives of my research I had to consider these existing theories and recommendations.

In Section 2.2 (Curriculum implementation) of Chapter 2 I reflect on these recommendations that emphasized teacher support and adequate teacher development (DoE 2000:23). Also in Chapter Four of the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 attention is drawn to the fact that teachers are left on their own to implement curriculum changes with no adequate support to see such changes through: “There are no support structures in place to help teachers deal with the pressures of classroom implementation” (DoE, 2000:61). The qualitative methodology of the research is in the particular context of the Foundation Phase and is directed towards actions to be taken by teachers and education specialists who work with these teachers in schools and in other professional development initiatives.

I consider the following:

- The purpose of my study.
- The role of the people involved.
- The data collection and analysis process.
- The presentation of the findings resulting from the research.



Data was collected over different periods of time and at different stages of the three years of 2006 to 2009. Participants were firstly asked to complete the teacher profile which consisted of mostly biographical details of participants. The teacher profile also provided me with information regarding teacher’s qualifications and years of experience in the Foundation phase.

When drawing up my questionnaires I ensured that the questions were very clear and not ambiguous. The questions were designed to act as prompts to encourage participants to give their individual comment about certain categories of curriculum implementation and understanding. The questions were also relevant and related to the research topic. It was of utmost importance that the data that I needed to inform my research could be collected from the research instruments used. Another crucial factor was to be certain that the participants understood what was expected of them and to ensure that terms used made sense to them so that they were willing and competent to supply answers to the questions. Participants also

needed to be comfortable with the tone and language in which the questions were set. The questionnaire and teacher profile are an adapted version of instruments used during a mathematics and science project which worked with specifically foundation phase educators over a period of three years in the West Coast Wine lands district of the Western Cape.

There are basically two types of questionnaires. These are:

- Open questionnaires that ask for opinions or information in the participants own words. These types of open-ended questions are extremely useful when you want people to explain their reactions.
- Closed questionnaires on the other hand seek specific information, with little room for the respondent's interpretations and are used if you seek specified information. Such questionnaires may require multiple-choice or direct short-answer responses.

A baseline questionnaire was drawn up which consisted of questions that were directed to receive initial responses from participating teachers. This was a type of closed questionnaire. Such baseline information also required an initial teacher profile which assisted me in gathering data about the participants and their school setting. The questionnaire for the teachers and the questionnaire that the Foundations Phase Head of Department completed consist of the following three different types of questions

- High level (thinking) vs. low level (thinking) questions.

The level of questions refers to how the question promotes thinking. High level questions require individuals to think rather than simply recall, paraphrase, or summarize. Low level questions are those asking the individual to merely recall, repeat, or summarize what has already been stated or written down.

- Divergent (many answers) vs. convergent (few answers) questions.

The number of possible right answers indicates a question's divergence. Divergent questions are those for which there can be a number of "correct" or discussible answers. Convergent questions imply that there is one right answer.

- Structured and unstructured questions.

Certain questions are more structured than others. Structured questions provide background information, specify or narrow the focus, and otherwise orient the respondent to the question and its aims. Unstructured questions are wide open questions.

Classroom observation was done according to negotiated times with the respective teachers and lasted for approximately two hours of the contact time in classrooms. During said observations I used a structured observation form on which observation notes were made. The observations include the following data to be collected.

- Observational notes: that which is observed at the site.
- Observer's commentary: that which is documented from the field notes.

At first two of the teachers were very anxious and displayed signs of being very aware of their own limitations. I reassured them and renegotiated a day that I would return to complete the observations. The observations in the classroom gave me broader insight into the practice and how the teachers are managing the implementation of the curriculum at classroom level. I was able to observe the teachers and the learners in practice as well as to compare the answers provided in the questioners to the reality of the implementation of the curriculum at the level of the classroom. The education specialists whom I interviewed provided insight into their experience of how the teachers are managing the implementation process as well of what they view as areas of concern and also gave insight into what support the Foundation phase teachers still needed.

The research method, with its use of multiple data collection and analysis methods, offered me opportunities to triangulate and compare data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions. The use of different research instruments strengthened the research findings as well as the validity thereof and allowed me to make well informed conclusions and recommendations based on the questionnaires, observations and the interviews with the HOD of the Foundation Phase as well as those with the two education specialists. Certainly all the problems that exist and the why and how will not be remedied by this research only. The research could however contribute to the existing theories as well as provide scope for teachers to make changes and to empower themselves.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I provide insight into the use of a qualitative methodological paradigm. How the interpretive theoretical approach broadened the understanding of how the teachers were implementing the curriculum as key to the research questions is also elaborated on. Participatory action research as research design which is a deliberate solution oriented

investigation into the RNCS and its implementation in the Foundation phase is discussed. Each of the four research instruments which were used is individually discussed and the need for different types of questions is argued.

In Chapter 4 the researcher focuses on the data that was collected and analyzed. The analysis of data describes the teachers' responses in the various forms as collected. The analysis also provides insight into the participants' perception of the National Curriculum as practised in primary schools in South Africa and as in the case of this study particularly in the Western Cape.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Data was collected at different time slots from 2006 until 2009 during this research. Five Foundation Phase teachers of school X participated in this research process. Each participant completed the teacher profile, the questionnaire and was observed in their classroom at particular times as negotiated with them individually. Participants first completed the teacher profile which provided the background to understanding each participant's qualifications, language of instruction and other factors pertaining to the grades they taught.

The questionnaires completed by teachers and observations in classrooms provided rich insight into how the curriculum is perceived and implemented at the level of the Foundation Phase in primary schools. A separate questionnaire that was completed by the Head of Department of the Foundation Phase teachers also assisted with the understanding of how educators are grappling with the curriculum and what factors constrain implementation. The interview with two education specialists furthermore supported the hypothesis of this study that insufficient steps are not in place to provide enough follow up support after the implementation process has started. Many teachers are still not clear on the assessment process that needs to be included in their teaching and learning and all teachers do not display a common understanding of the assessment standards.

In this chapter I present, analyze and discuss the data from all four instruments namely the profile, questionnaire, observation and interviews. In order to check the validity of the instruments and data collected, before analysis both the instruments and collected data were presented to education specialists with whom I work at the Schools Development Unit of the University of Cape Town. They were asked to review the instruments and data collected through the questionnaires in relation to the data collected through field notes during observation in respective classrooms. The education specialists made valuable recommendations that were taken into account when the data is presented and analyzed. Quite a few of my colleagues are researchers in their own field and they have provided very useful feedback which guided the researcher during analysis of the data.

## 4.2 Verification of data

In order to ensure internal validity the following was done:

- Data were collected through multiple resources such as profiles, questioners, observations and interviews in order to ensure triangulation.
- The participants' meanings were checked by constant dialogue between the researcher and individual participants.
- Education Specialist interviews that were recorded were verified by allowing participants to respond to interview questions in writing also.

## 4.3 Presentation of data from teacher profiles and questionnaires

I classified the data from the baseline profiles and questionnaires into units of information that could later form a basis for further investigation. In the analysis, grouping of similar factors relating to the Revised National Curriculum and its implementation is also done to provide a clear picture of the data and conclusions drawn thereof. The results are presented in table, graph and narrative form.

The teacher profile clearly indicates only one of the five teachers not having acquired her Grade 12 certificate. It was interesting to note that the Foundation Phase Head of Department has been trained as a senior teacher, yet she seems quite confident and comfortable in her position as HOD of the Foundation Phase.

The table on the next page provides a summary of the initial data that was collected from the teachers by using a teacher profile as shown in appendix A. I found it very helpful to have a tool that provided a glance into each teacher's background and classroom. In a classroom based on the education philosophies of the new curriculum, the teacher is the leader, but like all effective leaders, he/she attends closely to the learners and involves them thoroughly in the journey. Creating a Foundation Phase classroom environment that provides plenty of support for teaching and learning will contribute powerfully to children's development in school. The Foundation Phase classroom is built around individuals, various small groups and the class as a whole. To address various learning needs that make up the whole, teachers and learners work together in a variety of ways. Materials, time, grouping, tasks and teaching



strategies should be managed to link learners with essential skills at appropriate levels of challenge and interest.

**Table 3: Summary of teacher profiles**

School	Phase	Teacher	Gender	Years teaching	Home language	Second language	Qualification	Grade s	Learners in class	Language of instruction	
School X: A primary school situated in a rural area of the Overberg.	Foundation Phase: Five teachers that range from Grade 1 to Grade 3.	Teacher A	Female	16	Afrikaans	English	Matric plus 3 years	Grade 1	29	Afrikaans	
		Tables clustered in groups of 4 & 6. The teacher was talking all the time with very little learner involvement. Teacher does not portray a good disposition towards her learners. Definitely not a positive classroom culture.									
		Teacher B	Female	10	Afrikaans	English	Higher Education Diploma Senior Phase	Grade 2 F Phase HOD	39	Afrikaans	
		Neat and spacious classroom. Tables arranged in rows and placed in groups of four. Uses various containers for storage of apparatus. Use of ice-cream containers on tables with learner's name written on it. Teacher has a very good relationship with learners. Struggles with learners who do not concentrate long enough.									
		Teacher C	Female	17	Afrikaans	English	Matric plus 4 years HED	Grade 2	30	Afrikaans	
		Tables are clustered in groups. After whole group work teacher works on carpet with one group while the other groups work at tables. She knows learners well and portrays a good relationship with them. Have lots of resources and materials which can be managed more effectively.									
		Teacher D	Female	27	Afrikaans	English	Grade 10 plus 2 years	Grade 3	30	Afrikaans	
		Spacious classroom which is not too neat. Tables clustered in two's. Teacher did maths with the whole class and it is obvious that she does not use group work most of the time. Too much of teacher talk during lesson. Mostly teacher transferring information. Learners were asked to volunteer to complete problems on board. Some learners struggled with the calculations. Not very OBE orientated.									
		Teacher E	Female	26	Afrikaans	English	Matric plus 3 years	Grade 3	42	Afrikaans	
		Groups clustered in 4 & 6. Whole class teaching. She read a story to the learners and asked questions from the book which they were not always ready to answer. Although she is observed as a traditional teacher she handled the learners well and spoke to them in an encouraging tone. Her classroom is not spacious enough and much more can be done with the organisation of materials and resources.									

#### **4.4 Data analysis of teacher profiles**

Table 3 reflects the teachers' gender, grade, number of learners per grade and language of instruction as captured in the profile completed by each teacher. All the teachers are female and this is the trend across the schools that I work with. I have found only two men teaching in the Foundation Phase in the primary schools that I work in. The language of instruction of the school at which the research was done is Afrikaans and there are only a few learners enrolled in the Intermediate phase who speak Xhosa. No learners who speak any of the other official languages of South Africa are enrolled in the Foundation Phase of this primary school.

I have also included a brief note on the teachers' classrooms and dispositions as observed during the observations done in each grade. Three of the teachers have more than 10 years experience in teaching and two more than twenty years. It was evident during the classroom observations and informal discussions with the teachers who have been teaching more than 20 years in the Foundation Phase that they found the curriculum changes quite overwhelming and that they needed continuous support to implement all that is expected of them.

#### **4.5 Data analysis of teacher questionnaires**

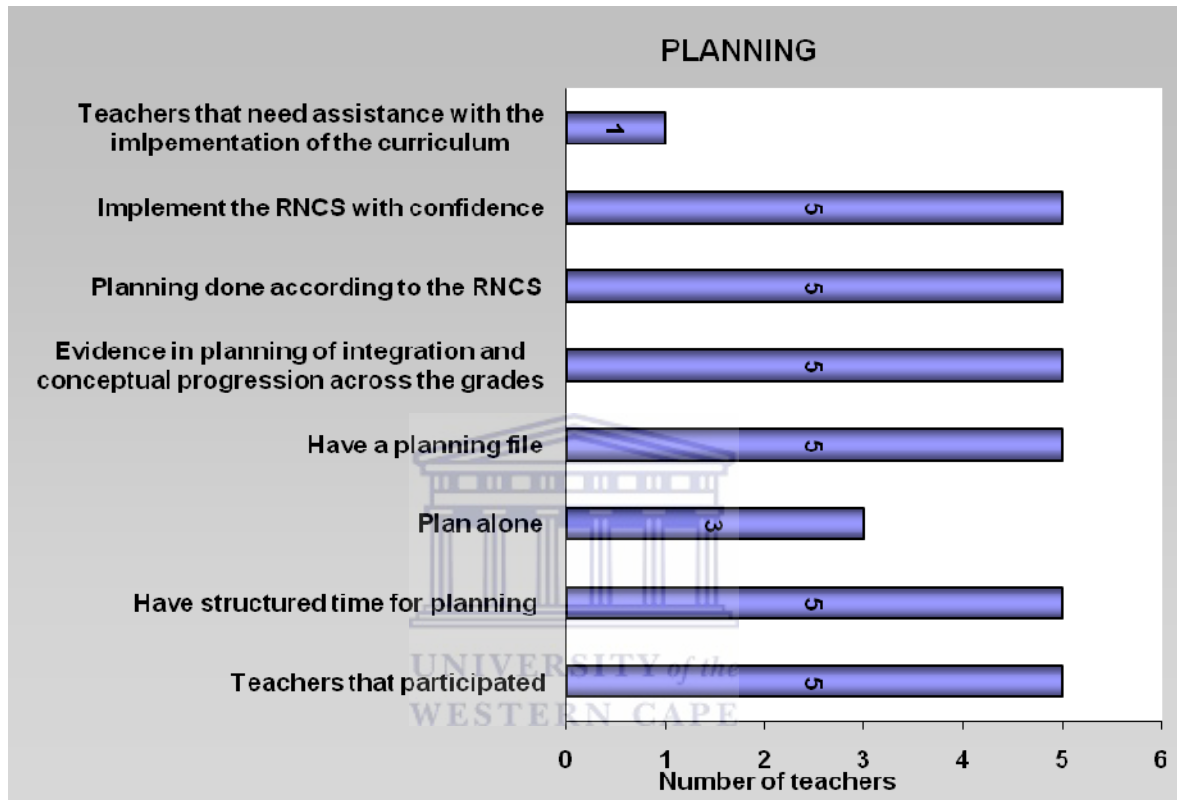
The structured data derived from the questionnaires used in the study is drawn from the teacher questionnaires and is displayed in graph form. Initially I categorized the data according to the sections as portrayed on the various parts of the questionnaire. I immediately noticed a trend of similar answers to questions and subsequently used the information to look for relations of answers to observations done in each particular participant's classroom.

Firstly I provide the analysis of the teachers' questionnaires and provide an analysis of the HOD questionnaire later. The graphs and tables that follow display the various categories of data collected as reflected in the three part series of the teachers' questionnaire as referred to in Chapter 3.

The graph and table that follows provide insight into the first part of the questionnaire which dealt with planning and implementation of the RNCS. Only one educator indicated that she needed assistance with the implementation of the curriculum while my observation in

classrooms and informal discussions with the participants clearly showed that more than one of them needs assistance with the management and implementation of the curriculum.

**Graph 1: Planning**



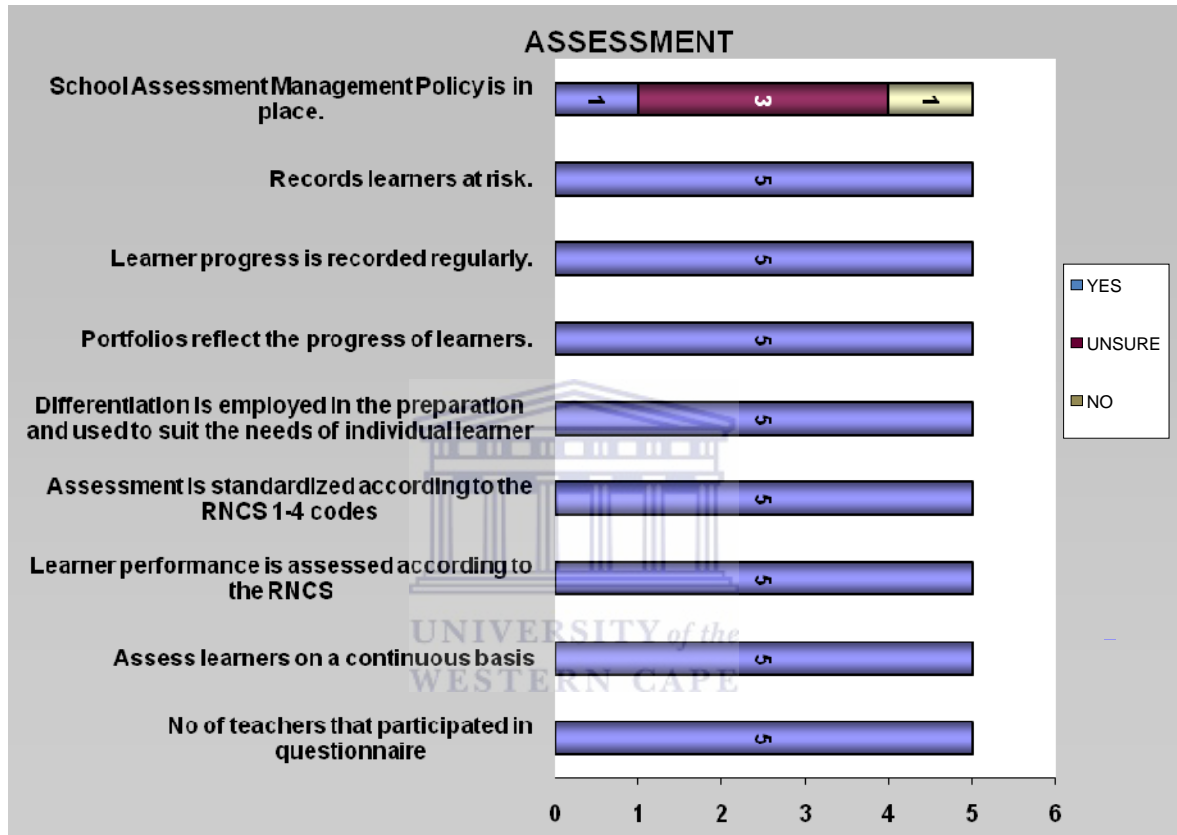
**Table 4: Summary of data displayed in graph 1**

This summary relates to questions on planning and it was completed by 5 teachers.

Category of questions on planning	Teachers
They have structured time for planning	5
Teachers that plan alone	3
Teachers that have a planning file	5
Evidence in planning of integration and conceptual progression across the grades	5
Teachers that do planning according to the RNCS	5
Teachers that implement the RNCS with confidence	5
Teachers that need assistance with the implementation of the curriculum	1

The next table and graph display the questions of the second part of the questionnaire that relates to assessment as stipulated in the curriculum and assessment policy and was completed by five teachers in the Foundation Phase of school X where I conducted the research.

**Graph 2: Assessment**

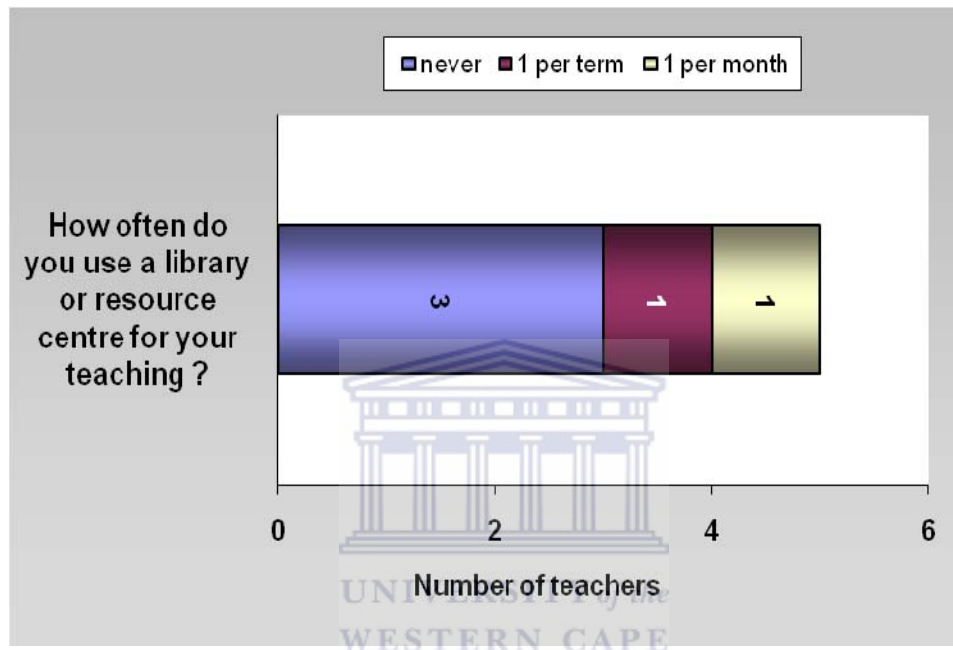


**Table 5: Summary of data displayed in graph 2**

Category of questions on assessment	Yes	Unsure	No
Teachers that assess learners on a continuous basis	5		
Learner performance is assessed according to the RNCS	5		
Assessment is standardized according to the RNCS 1-4 codes	5		
Differentiation is applied in preparation of assessment	5		
Portfolios reflect the progress of learners.	5		
Learner progress is recorded regularly.	5		
Records are kept of learners at risk.	5		
School Assessment Management Policy is in place.	1	3	1

The third part of the questionnaire included questions that would elicit answers on general curriculum issues such as the use of resources to strengthen curriculum implementation. The answers as provided by the research participants to two of the questions related to the general category are displayed in the next two tables and graphs.

**Graph 3: The use of library or resource centre**

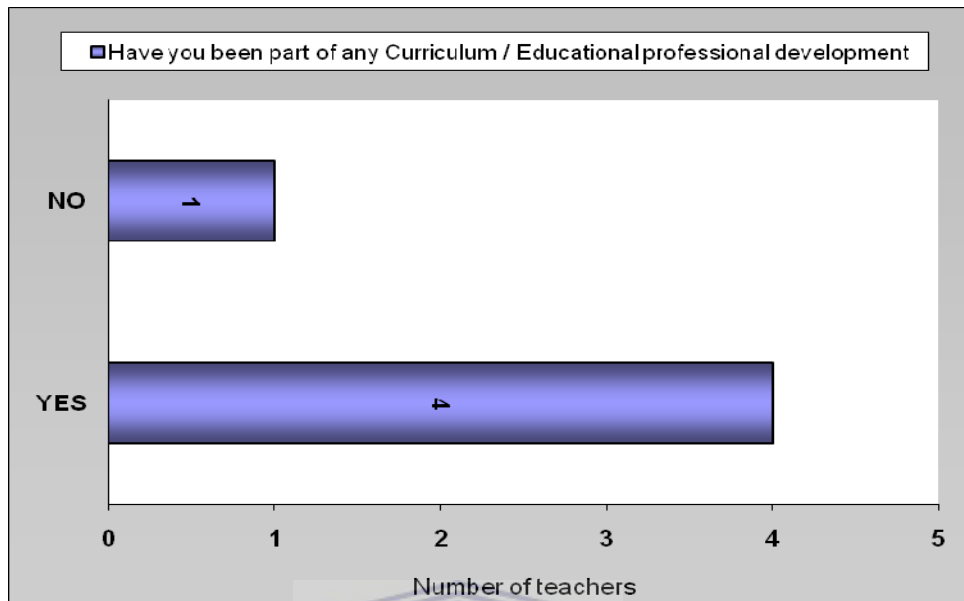


**Table 6: Summary of data displayed in graph 3**

Question in general category of questionnaire	Never	Per term	Per month	More often
How often do you use a library or resource centre?	3	1	1	

The implementation of the curriculum needs to be strengthened by the use of good learning and teaching support material. During observations in the classroom it was clear that the three teachers indicated above whom never use a library or resource centre are not providing adequate stimuli through the use of support material. These classrooms also do not portray inspiring learning atmospheres.

**Graph 4: Curriculum and professional development**



**Table 7: Summary of data displayed in graph 4**

Question in general category of questionnaire	Yes	No
Have you been part of any Curriculum / Educational professional development	4	1

Only one of the participants indicated that she has never been part of any development pertaining to the curriculum that she was expected to implement in the Foundation Phase. This particular teacher has not been part of any of the orientation sessions to introduce C2005, neither has she had any formal training aimed at broadening understanding of the curriculum and its requirements. The participant also communicated her fears as to whether she is doing justice to her learners or not.

The last two questions in the general category of the questionnaire related to professional development and other resources that teachers may need to assist them with the implementation of the RNCS. The professional development support that the teachers received were indicated as Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), RNCS, Mathematics and Literacy courses. Only one of the teachers did not indicate any professional development.

On the question- *What other resources or curriculum development do you need to assist you with the implementation of the RNCS?*

The teachers responded that they needed assistance with Life Skills, inclusivity, assessment and resources such as a school based resource centre. The provision of relevant resources for educators and learners is important for the successful implementation of the curriculum as expressed by one of the teachers as a general comment on the questionnaire.

The questionnaires completed by Foundation Phase teachers were intended to examine their understanding and to establish how they are managing the implementation of the RNCS. The related questions provided opportunities for teachers to give their honest response to questions as designed in these questionnaires. I noticed that most of the teachers had similar answers to most of the set questions with the exception of two who differed in their responses to some of the questions. One teacher commented on the curriculum as providing a huge challenge in so far as she always has to search for new information to assist with the implementation of the curriculum.

I will now proceed to provide data as gathered from the questionnaire which was completed by the Foundation Phase Head of Department of the teachers and who also participated in the research process. These questions are incorporated in Appendix F. The data will be presented as per question and was translated from Afrikaans into English.

#### **4.6 Response as reflected on Foundation Phase Head of Department questionnaire**

1. What were your first impressions of OBE and C2005?

*There was too much focus on the acquisition of skills and the crucial aspects of Literacy and Numeracy was ignored.*

2. Did you receive the necessary training to implement C2005 and was it adequate?

*I received a “crash course”. All elements of the curriculum, policy, guidelines, implementation and everything possible were forced on us. Training was insufficient. Educators were thrown into the deep end and just had to implement the curriculum.*

3. What in your experience are the difficulties that educators are facing with the implementation of the new curriculum?

*The focus on administration and administrative tasks overshadow the teaching and learning.*

4. What would you define as successes of the new curriculum?

*The ability of learners to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attributes can be defined as useful. The learner can become more self-reliant. The parrot way of learning made way for more independent learning.*

5. Do you meet regularly to sort out problems or have discussions and what is the focus of the meetings?

*Yes we meet regularly. We have open discussions about our work and our learners. As colleagues we learn from one another's input at these meetings.*

6. What are the areas of the new curriculum that educators have difficulties with?

*Assessment.*

*Planning and meaningful integration across the curriculum.*

7. Is there a better understanding of the Curriculum after it has been revised?

*The streamlining and clustering of assessment standards improved understanding.*

8. What in your view can still be done to support teachers in the Foundation Phase with the implementation of the new curriculum?

*More in-service training and less late afternoon sessions are needed.*

*Classroom support at schools should be done during and after training.*



#### **4.7 Data analysis of Foundation Phase Head of Department questionnaire**

Comments indicated that the HOD is acknowledging challenges still facing educators. Assessment, planning as well as integration have been identified as areas with which educators are still struggling. Training is still noted as insufficient and the data collected through various instruments provide evidence of further training and support that is needed for the curriculum to be implemented successfully. The idea of replacing crash afternoon sessions with longer in-service training that focus on theory and knowledge that relates to classroom practice is a desperate need that teachers and HOD articulate clearly. The WCED is attempting something like this at the Cape Teaching Institute where three week courses in numeracy, literacy and life skills for Foundation Phase teachers are presented. I have taught on these courses during 2006, 2007 and 2008 when the Schools Development Unit was responsible for the delivery of some of the courses. The success of such courses is not measured yet. This will be something to consider for any new educational policy that has its roots in the classroom.

The HOD also expressed the view that the review of the curriculum which brought about the streamlining and clustering of Assessment Standards improved understanding of the Assessment Standards to some extent. Although the Foundation Phase department at school X meets on a regular basis to discuss and share practices related to curriculum implementation much more needed to be done to ensure that such discussions and the sharing of practices improves the implementation of these ideas consistently across grades at the school.

#### **4.8 Observation notes**

For the observation in classrooms I adapted an observation sheet which we used for observing numeracy and literacy lessons in the Rural Education Project in which I work. The Rural Education Project offered differentiated interventions to support numeracy and literacy in thirty eight rural schools over a period of four years. The observation sheet had a cover page which indicated the grade, number of learners in the classroom, date of observation, lesson topic and classroom organisation. I discussed the observation with the teachers right at the outset and they were not resistant to me spending time observing the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Individual dates for observation was set with each teacher

and it took place in the morning as Foundation Phase learners leave school earlier depending on the grade. The observations were scheduled for two and a half hours each and started at 8.30 in the morning. The following most important aspects emerged from my observations.

#### **(a) Administrative overload**

The observations in the classroom indicated that the formalities like administrative tasks, work schedules, teacher appraisal and keeping of learner records weighed heavily on the abilities of teachers to select appropriate lesson content and apply different strategies to assist learners with demonstration of the assessment standards as prescribed in the foundation phase learning areas. One of the teachers has developed her own internal strategies to monitor and moderate the standard of curriculum implementation. This is only practised in one grade and could be a very useful practice if applied across the Foundation Phase.

#### **(b) Teaching methods and approaches**

From the classroom observation it was quite apparent that the majority of these teachers needed a broader repertoire of teaching methods and classroom management techniques. Teachers have fallen back on common sense insights and intuitive solutions and reverted to “back-to-basics” strategies to improve teaching and learning. There is renewed emphasis on drilling the multiplication tables, spelling, counting and practising basic calculation. After the observations it was quite apparent that the practice of the curriculum in the classroom was in most cases with the exception of only two of the five teachers contradicting the response to some of the questions in the questionnaire. From the data in Section 4.5 (Graph 1:Planning) all the teachers indicated that they were implementing the curriculum with confidence yet this was not evident from all the teachers during the observations. Only one teacher indicated that she needs assistance with the implementation of the curriculum as shown in graph 1 as well.

#### **(c) Integration and Progression**

In my field notes which were done during my observation in classrooms I noted that integration in all these grades are specifically evident in the planning of learning area programmes, work schedules and lesson planning. However, there seems to be considerable variance between grades in terms of the effectiveness of the application of integration. The

Foundation Phase teachers seem pre-occupied with the formalities of curriculum implementation, which affects aspects like meaningful goal oriented integration. The teachers have integration as a requirement of the curriculum planned neatly on paper but the practice thereof is not witnessed as well as it is part of the Learning Programme planning, work schedules and lesson planning. Integration should serve to support the knowledge and skills across learning areas and one aspect that is integrated across learning areas in a meaningful manner feeds into the development of another.

I noted that there is a missing link in terms of what is planned with regard to integration and the practice thereof in classrooms and activities. In many instances it was observed as naming integration between learning areas and yet not applying it in a meaningful manner to enhance teaching and learning and to broaden understanding of certain concepts through integration. There is also a clear lack of conceptual progression across the grades and learning is not staggered in a coherent manner.

#### **4.9 Discussion of teacher data**

At school X the Intermediate Phase teachers call upon Foundation Phase teachers to provide remedial assistance to struggling learners after their own classes are dismissed. From the available information, it appears that these interventions constitute “more of the same” in terms of the teaching methods to which learners are exposed during formal lessons, i.e. drilling basic skills and knowledge. Teachers are generally aware that their learners need more stimulation, and many expressed the wish that WCED workshops should provide clearer understanding of the assessment which they grapple with.

All the teachers are implementing the daily half-hour reading period, but apparently with varying degrees of effectiveness. There does not seem to be clarity about the WCED’s policy objective/s regarding this component of the literacy strategy, and teachers use the half-hour for a variety of different purposes. Most common are free reading for pleasure, vocabulary extension by means of lists of high frequency words and drilling of spelling. The literacy half-hour lacks clear structure in most of these grades.

The use of the questionnaire and observation instruments provided data that could be used to verify whether teachers’ views as expressed in the questionnaire correspond with the

observation as done in the classroom. The collection of these data sources was successful and although there are a lot of commonalities between responses on the teacher questionnaires the observations provided rich data on varying degrees of curriculum practice and understanding in the classrooms. The data derived from the classroom observations revealed that although only one of the teachers indicated that she needs assistance with planning there are more that need similar assistance. The curriculum is implemented in different ways than required by NCS policy and there is no common understanding of learning outcomes and assessment standards as dictated by the policy. Participants recognize factors like teaching and learning styles as well as the role of the teacher in facilitating learning as key factors that if understood correctly can improve the practice.

It is also evident from the data that teachers have not been skilled to be reflective practitioners. Effective teachers do not use the same set of practices all the time. Instead, effective teachers need to constantly reflect on their work, observe whether learners demonstrate what the Assessment Standards intend and then adjust teaching accordingly. Even in my discussions with the teachers after data collection it became clearer that the practice of reflective action research can assist educators to make the much needed changes before all cry out that this or any curriculum is not successful.

Informal discussion with teachers after observations clearly indicated that the majority of the Foundation Phase teachers at school X are not confident enough to voice their opinions and uncertainties with regard to the problems they experience with the implementation of the curriculum at district meetings and sessions with other teachers. Three of the teachers indicated to me that they refrain from discussions that require an honest account of what they are struggling with as they do not wish to be viewed as incompetent and as one of them phrased it, “I certainly do not want the Curriculum Advisors breathing down my neck and expect me to deliver work that they themselves are uncertain about”.

#### **4.10 Presentation of data from interviews with two Education Specialists.**

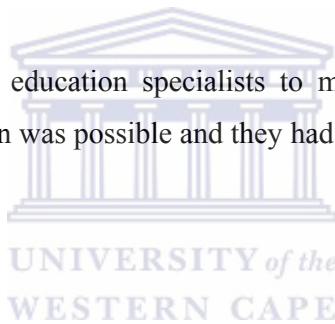
I conducted interviews with two education specialists. The interviews were done on two separate occasions and were recorded. I have also tasked them to write their responses to the interviews on the interview instrument and it helped me to verify their answers as given in the transcripts of the interviews.

Both these education specialists have a lot of experience within the Foundation Phase and are in touch with how the curriculum is implemented in classrooms. One of them is working as a Foundation Phase curriculum advisor in the Overberg district where I have conducted this research. The other education specialist is currently working with FP educators in the Rural Education Project of the Schools Development unit of UCT. They are reliable sources and have provided good insight into the research questions. Their responses support my claims as made in the hypothesis of this research that teachers need much more support and do not have a clear understanding of Assessment Standards that are a crucial part of the curriculum that inform teaching and learning and therefore I am confident that the recommendations and conclusions as set out in Chapter 5 are valid.

#### **4.11 Data analysis of the interviews with Education Specialists**

The first question required the education specialists to mention any features of the new curriculum which in their opinion was possible and they had to justify the answers.

Their responses were as follow:



Interviewee 1- *“Learners are given the opportunity to work in groups and independently. The focus is on learners to be actively involved in the learning process and this provides the opportunity to learn from peers.”*

Interviewee 2- *“The new curriculum has given the space to focus on knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The only question is how educators keep a healthy balance between these aspects”.*

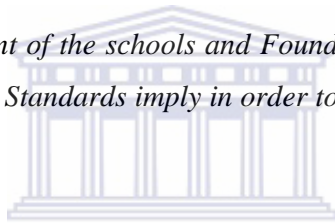
The constructivist method of allowing learners to construct knowledge as they broaden their understanding and that they can learn at their level and pace is cited by the two education specialists as good features but there is concern that many teachers are not practising these aspects well. Class size is also noted as a factor that constrains successful curriculum implementation.

From both the interviews it is clear that teachers are not all understanding what is expected of them with regard to the Learning Outcomes and more specifically the Assessment Standards. Professional development which they think that teachers need is listed below:

- Unpacking the Assessment Standards and broadening understanding from grade R to grade 3.
- Development and design of effective assessment tasks.
- Effective application of Integration and Progressions across grades.
- Classroom management

Interviewee 1- *“My biggest concern is that Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards are interpreted differently and some educators show a huge lack of understanding”.*

Interviewee 2- *“The management of the schools and Foundation Phase Departments should understand what the Assessment Standards imply in order to assist educators. They should be able to do the following:*



- *Understand the Assessment Standards;*
- *Know how it should be planned;*
- *Know how the curriculum must be implemented;*
- *Planning of lessons must be done in a way that learners can demonstrate the assessment standards; and*
- *Learners’ development needs must be taken into account.*

Another concern reflected on is that all role players at school should be well informed with regard to curriculum practices.

Interviewee 2 put it this way -*“Well informed principals inspire well informed heads of departments and in return well informed heads of department inspire well informed classroom practices”.* *“In many instances it is merely accepted that all role-players know the curriculum and that is certainly not the case in my experience”.*

#### **4.12 Discussion of the interviews with Education Specialists**

The responses of these participants have assisted me to make the claims that teachers need more support to broaden their understanding in order to implement the curriculum better and also need to understand how to make the policy of the curriculum come to light in their grades.

In Chapter 1 I cite the following as part of my hypothesis. Teachers do not display a common understanding of the assessment standards. The above concern is valid as varying degrees of understanding and interpretation of assessment standards was also noted during classroom observation and discussions. Precisely because the learning outcomes and assessment standards are two design features that clearly describe the goals and outcomes each learner needs to achieve in order to proceed to each successive level of the system it is an area that needs clarity of understanding as well as a common interpretation by all teachers irrespective of the grade they teach.

The analysis of the interview notes and transcripts indicates that the area of understanding assessment standards and learning outcomes to reach the goals of the curriculum is a need that should be addressed before we can see the curriculum implemented effectively. Both the parties interviewed also expressed the need to provide platforms where teachers can be encouraged to share best practices and to learn from one another. The planning and design of assessment tasks as well as classroom management is also noted as key areas for further professional development. In my experience I have also found that teachers need to be skilled to manage their sometimes very large classes effectively. This is an area of development which has not received much attention yet.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter the results of data collected was analyzed and the results obtained from the teacher questionnaires, classroom observations and HOD questionnaire show a degree of commonality in terms of the questions asked and observation done. The data and informal discussions with the teachers at School X reflect an awareness of the gaps that still exist in terms of successful curriculum implementation and provide me with a clearer direction of what the needs are out in the field.

During my observations in School X and in my work in schools across the Foundation and Intermediate Phases I have observed teachers displaying varying understanding of the Assessment Standards and of the application thereof in activities those learners are engaged in. A common understanding is needed across grades in a phase because the Assessment Standards gradually requires deepening of understanding as learners' progress in a grade and across grades. I strongly argue that well planned Integration on paper need to be practiced more efficiently in the classroom for learners to benefit from this aspect as envisaged in the curriculum.

It has also become clear to me during observations of classroom practice and in my work with Foundation Phase teachers that the above is critical in order for a teacher to implement the curriculum effectively in the classroom. The education specialist input was extremely helpful in that it provides an honest account of what works and what still needs attention with regard to the research question that seeks to find out to what extent Foundation Phase teachers are managing the implementation of the RNCS, as set out in policy documents.

As I embarked on a deliberate action research process investigating the implementation of the curriculum in the Foundation Phase the analyzed data and the results obtained from this study would be used in order to improve my own practice. I am consistently seeking for ways to improve my practice and based on this research I will now design methods and strategies that will deepen teachers' understanding of the content of the curriculum that they are required to implement successfully. Understanding what has been researched allows for informed change and at the same time it is informed by that change. Such reflective research promotes growth. It gives rise to new opportunities, to reflect on and to assess our teaching and learning; to explore and test new ideas, methods and materials and this can lead to the practicing of new approaches and methodologies. This process also develops a problem-solving ethos which is undoubtedly what we need in education with all its demands.

I am certain that I will indeed be able to make the needed changes to my own practice based on the learning from this research and my understanding of the areas of concern will assist me to influence the course of training and development of Foundation Phases teachers whom we work with.



In the next chapter my conclusions, recommendations and concluding remarks will take into account the data collected and analyzed and much of it will inform my closing view points. There are clearly aspects of change as presented by the Review Committee on C2005 that should receive further attention. Certainly some of the aspects as referred to in this research should be of importance for the implementation of any new or other educational change.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Having experienced most of the educational hardships we as teachers faced in South Africa I cannot ignore the difficulties, constraints and challenges that teachers have to deal with when embarking on implementation and management of the curriculum. In this chapter I discuss the challenges that teachers still face today taking into account what the data collected reflect. I also focus on the important contribution that teachers have to make for the implementation of any curriculum for that matter.

This study with its use of multiple data collection and analysis methods, offered me opportunities to triangulate and compare data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions. The final recommendations and concluding remarks consider the analysis based on the findings as collected and interpreted.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

I present the following two sets of conclusions, namely conclusions regarding the challenges Foundation Phase teachers face and conclusions regarding the classroom organization and management in the Foundation Phase.

##### **5.2.1 Challenges Foundation Phase teachers face**

###### **(a) The difficulty of making a paradigm shift**

Making a paradigm shift from the old way of curriculum dissemination to the new is one of the biggest challenges facing teachers and other curriculum managers at schools. We have become so accustomed to our traditional ways of dealing with curriculum management and implementation thereof that it has become very difficult to make the much needed shift from the traditional to the transformational way of implementing the curriculum. Making that much needed shift is therefore a huge challenge in itself. The National Curriculum Statement is an important step away from the content-laden, often ideologically distorted, examination-oriented apartheid curricular. It emphasizes 'learning by doing', problem solving, skills

development and continuous assessment. Lack of understanding of what is expected and the mind-set of teachers that struggle to make the necessary shifts that need to be made in order to practice changes can constrain change.

### **(b) Integration and progression**

From my observations in the classrooms it is clear that even though teachers have planned conceptual progression as indicated in Section 4.5 (Graph 1:Planning) of Chapter 4 the actual teaching and learning reveal no evidence of realistic application of the concept of progression. Although the curriculum promotes integration and progression of competencies through the grades there are still factors like the lack of understanding of how and when integration will be effective as well as the inconsistent application of progression of learning activities that impede on the development of skills and knowledge as learners progress from grade to grade.

### **(c) Curriculum implementation**

We also need to bear in mind that the pace and complexity by which change is introduced can at times be overwhelming. Another major challenge would be to make the links between theory and practice. The policy that proposes how the curriculum should be set out and conducted in schools informs teachers and managers of the curriculum as to what is expected. The data collected has shown that teachers do not have a common understanding of the Assessment Standards that are central to the curriculum. Teachers need to find ways to ensure that learners are equipped to demonstrate these Assessment Standards.

## **5.2.2 Classroom organization and management in the Foundation Phase**

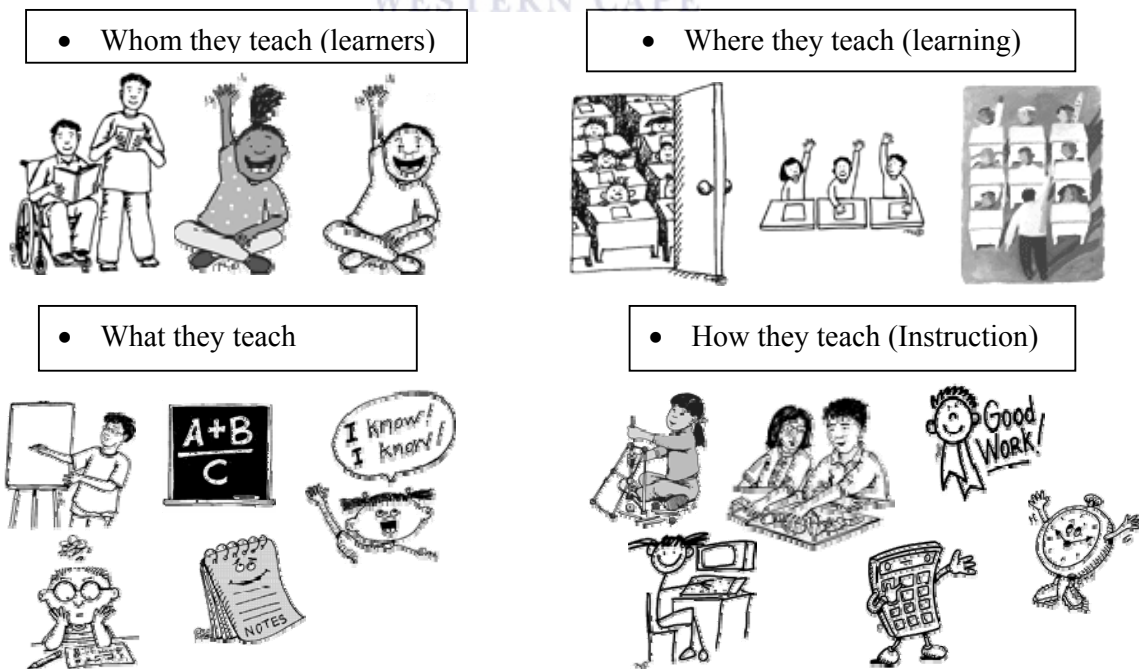
In Chapter 4 I provide insight into a classroom that supports the new curriculum. Organisation of resources, group work and interactive settings for learners to practice and learn need to be managed effectively. Classrooms need to include the effective organization and control of every aspect of the classroom and those who use it. Another major component of the learning environment is effective classroom management. Classroom management systems include routine ways of managing instructional and behavioral interactions in the

classroom. The various aspects of the classroom which need to be managed can be broadly categorized as:

- Physical infrastructure and resources
- Human Resources
- Teaching and Learning
- The implementation of the intended curriculum and its design features

Learning environment in education typically refers to the overall climate and culture of classrooms, including communication patterns, the design, feel, and organization of physical space, and the teacher's ability to manage students in the classroom. The teacher must believe that learners can accept responsibility and that your actions are closely related to the manner in which the learners' respond. From my observations in the classrooms I conclude that some of the Foundation Phase teachers are not yet managing an environment which complements curriculum implementation successfully. The following figure describes the elements that need to be considered in a classroom where the curriculum is implemented. Teachers need to focus on at least four elements in an effective classroom.

**Figure 2: Elements of an effective Foundation Phase classroom**



Adapted by Zonia Jooste from Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by design, Connecting Content & Kids, Carol Ann Tomlinson & Jay McTighe (1999)

From the observations done in the classrooms of research participants it was clear that teachers do not have a common understanding of the assessment standards and this affects what they teach. In turn the lack of understanding and planning of meaningful strategies and conceptual progression of learning influences instruction and how teachers interpret what the curriculum requires of learners in order to demonstrate their understanding of the learning outcomes and assessment standards as set out in the curriculum policy.

The observations in Foundation Phase classrooms support my conclusion that teachers need to understand the curriculum and the aspects that contribute to implementation thereof. The table below refers to the particular roles that the teachers and learners have and these roles can contribute to the success of curriculum implementation.

**Table 8: Roles of teachers and learners**

<b>Successful Curriculum Implementation demands particular roles from both the teachers and the learner.</b>	
<p>Teachers should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inspire learners to think by providing stimulation that will deepen understanding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> model teaching and learning by using appropriate tools, and resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> supply examples and ask probing questions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> apply multiple approaches</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> reflect on teaching and learning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> adapt teaching methods to ensure effective curriculum implementation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> allow for whole-class, group as well as individual activities</li> </ul>	<p>Learners have to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> think</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> question</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> rethink and reflect</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> apply new strategies and ideas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> apply knowledge and skills in various situations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> display understanding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> demonstrate their abilities to what the assessment standards of each learning outcome in a specific learning area prescribes</li> </ul>

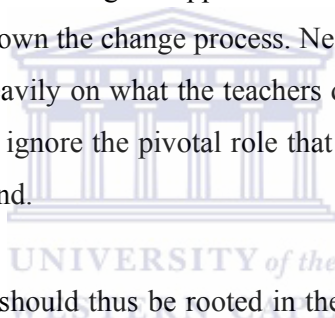
Adapted by Diane Hendricks from Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding design, Connecting Content & Kids, Carol Ann Tomlinson & Jay McTighe (1999).

The Foundation Phase classroom is built around individuals, various small groups and the class as a whole. To address various learning needs that make up the whole, teachers and learners work together in a variety of ways. Materials, time, grouping, tasks & teaching strategies should be managed to link learners with essential skills at appropriate levels of challenge and interest.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1 The teacher's role**

It is quite evident that the successful implementation of curriculum policy cannot succeed without the teacher at the heart of it all. Any educational change strategy is doomed to failure if those who need to make these changes happen at schools do not understand what is expected of them or they do not own the change process. Needless to say educational changes of any kind depends and rely heavily on what the teachers do in educational institutions. No effort at educational change can ignore the pivotal role that teachers have to play in order to ensure implementation of any kind.



Meaningful educational change should thus be rooted in the classroom as the experiences in the classroom have a crucial influence on the future of our learners and on how they will participate as citizens in the broader society we live in. Learner motivation is closely connected to the positive learning environment of the classroom. Teachers who strive to increase learner motivation will, in turn, improve the learning environment in the classroom. Some of these ways to increase motivation among learners are well researched, and some derive from the experience of veteran educators. I present a few of them below:

- Begin lessons by giving learners a reason to be motivated.
- Tell students exactly what you expect them to accomplish.
- Have learners set short-term goals.
- Capitalize on the arousal value of suspense, discovery, curiosity, exploration, control, and fantasy and occasionally do the unexpected when appropriate.

Teachers have to understand the Assessment Standards in order to provide opportunities and plan activities that will allow learners to demonstrate the Assessment Standards.

### **5.3.2 Integration and progression**

Teachers need to be skilled by curriculum advisors and other education developers in order to apply Integration successfully. Integration must be planned and practised in a manner that provide learners with experiences that positively influence the outcomes of learning areas so that they are able to make the necessary links within and across the learning areas.

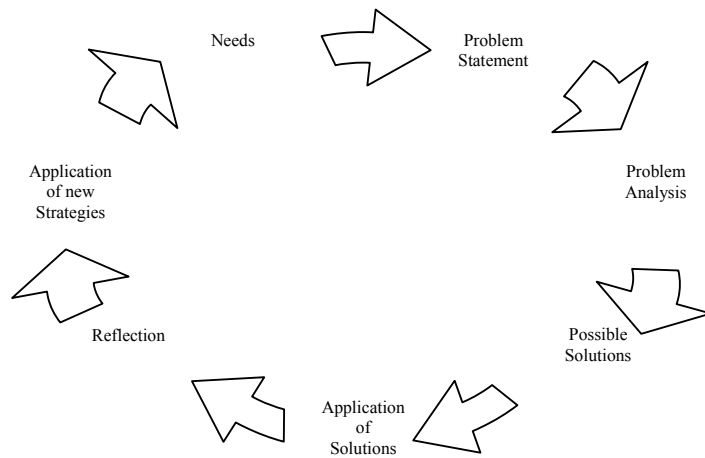
Meaningful integration must reinforce and expand learners' opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and values, and attain relevant knowledge across the curriculum. Well planned conceptual progression is another aspect that teachers need support with. Learners who are at different levels of development need to be exposed to teaching that scaffolds learning and which will enable them to move from one level to another

### **5.3.3 Curriculum implementation processes**

Any new implementation of policy should go through a specific process once it is embarked on. One should bear in mind that such a process is not cast in stone and one phase of a process has implications on another. Such a change process also takes into account the circumstances of the setting where change is likely to occur as well as the people involved who need to make the needed changes happen. There should be no blueprint that prescribes but rather pointers that should be taken into account when people involved set out on the change journey. As the journey is undertaken the route, pace and stops along the way may shift and change as one become aware of the factors that impacts on the change process.

I would argue that reflection and re-application of ideas can easily be fitted into this curriculum implementation process as a mechanism to implement the curriculum better. An adapted problem solving process could take on this form as indicated in figure 3 on the next page. The sketch in figure 3 provides a cycle of steps that feed into one another as it is embarked on after the identifying of needs and establishing of the problem. The analysis of the problem is followed by the application of possible solutions which are reflected on after application thereof.

**Figure 3: Problem-solving process**



Reflection throughout the process of curriculum implementation at the classroom level will allow the teacher the opportunity to critically reflect on his/her practice with the intention to adapt methods and strategies of teaching and learning in order to improve such practice.

#### **5.3.4 Reflection and change**

Teachers must engage in new opportunities, to build on curriculum practice. Teachers should be encouraged to reflect on and to assess their teaching and learning; to explore and test new ideas, methods and materials and this can lead to the practising of new approaches and methodologies. This process also develops a problem-solving ethos which is undoubtedly what we need in education with all its demands. I would also argue that in order for effective curriculum implementation teachers need to be orientated to the value of honest, meaningful reflection. Teachers need to understand fully what such reflection requires and awareness must be created of how it can benefit teaching and learning. The understanding of the concept of reflection after action is a prerequisite before embarking on any change. The need and worth of such a process must be understood from the beginning so that those who wish to embark on the change have a clear understanding of what this process entails.

Reflecting on the teaching and learning practice must be understood as a means of increasing knowledge about or improving teaching, learning and sometimes ultimately the implementation as well as management of the curriculum at our schools. Questions need to be answered that allow us to honestly reflect and evaluate our practice.



Reflection allows us to assess what we understand and what we can do differently to be more successful in our teaching and learning. A reflection process is useful when it gives an honest account of the factors that contribute to what we practice. Reflection should be a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is personally owned and conducted. It can also be characterized by a cycle of investigation that builds on the reflection to improve quality of teaching and learning. Teachers need to own the process of reflection and therefore no change process can reap success if it is merely forced upon teachers. The prior phase of orientation which brings about understanding is indeed essential to ensure acceptance and commitment to see the reflection on action process through.

### **5.3.5 Teamwork**

Teachers need to be working collaboratively. Collaboration between and among colleagues is of utmost significance if we want to achieve what we set out to do with any type of curriculum which informs our teaching. I view working together and not against one another as crucial to our course in education irrespective of our past when we were divided to serve the purpose of the apartheid government then. Team work can be used as a mechanism to share and learn from one another. Foundation Phase and all teachers need to strive to work together to achieve a common understanding of a particular topic or problem they face.

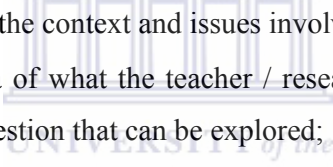
Sharing feedback with fellow team members and deciding on new approaches together after critical reflection as well as embarking on new approaches is valuable in order to improve your practice and this is what I will encourage in the schools with whom I work. There must also be close collaboration between education officials and teachers, and between teachers within the various phases of the schools in order to ensure that there is clear understanding of policy that must be implemented.

### **5.3.6 Reflective action research**

Taking into account the multiple responsibilities that teachers have the Education Department needs to introduce reflective action research as a means to increase knowledge about or improve teaching and learning. Hopkins (1994) used the term classroom research and clearly reflection by teachers on their classroom practice has not been utilized as part of the

Department of Education's strategies to assist teachers to make the much needed changes in order to improve effective curriculum delivery at schools.

This must not be introduced as something apart from what they are currently doing but rather as a mechanism to reflect on and assess their teaching and learning; to explore and test new ideas and methods in order to improve the education teachers deliver. Classroom action research simply means trying out ideas and understanding those actions so that some attempts can be made to improve or make changes in your classroom or school. Such reflective research promotes growth. I firmly believe that the practice of reflective action research at classroom level can result in critical review of current practices can make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning. Teachers need to be skilled to evaluate what they are engaging in, in a critical manner that will lead to transformation and eradication of the problems that hinder effective teaching and learning. Any process of reflection of the curriculum in action will also involve the following:

- 
- A clear understanding of the context and issues involved;
  - A clear and focused idea of what the teacher / researcher wants to investigate. This could entail a specific question that can be explored;
  - An honest account of the teacher's own values, beliefs and attitudes which informs the understanding of your own practice;
  - A willingness to question your own values, beliefs and practices;
  - A strategy for building on what is already known for example by reading articles about the issue you wish to explore and by consulting with others; and
  - A cyclical approach which enables the teacher / researcher to improve his/her practices in an ongoing and conscious manner must be applied consistently to be effective.

Changes that could be noticed through such a classroom action research process include the following:

- The classroom becomes a learning environment for teacher as well as learner;
- Teachers get opportunity to gain knowledge & become more aware of options, alternatives & possibilities for change;

- Opportunity to attend more carefully to methods, perceptions, understandings & whole approach to the teaching process is allowed through the classroom action research process;
- The teacher is in a better and strategic position to become inquiry-oriented and proactive in making changes with greater sense of impact and thus leave a mark on both learners and the teaching profession; and
- Teachers become more reflective & critical about their practice.

‘The teacher as classroom researcher’ is a field that certainly needs some exploration and it is one area which has not been utilized to improve teaching and learning in its current curriculum paradigm. Following on the initial orientation on classroom research educationists should work towards acceptance and commitment of the intended change endeavor or not. The experiences of the past have proven that teachers need to accept changes and own it before they can become committed to it.



### **5.3.7 Professional development**

A relevant professional development plan that supports teacher change and enlists the key issues relating to enhancing teaching and learning should be provided. Such a development plan with reflective classroom action research as its primary objective should entail changes in the classroom practice of teachers that brings about changes in the learning of learners and in turn changes in the attitudes of teachers. Reflection throughout the process of curriculum management and implementation at the classroom level will allow teachers the opportunity to critically reflect on his / her practice with the intention to adapt methods and strategies of teaching and learning in order to improve such practice.

Programmes for teacher development must transform and empower teachers to make the needed changes in their practices. Such programmes should not only make teachers aware of needed changes but should also allow for time and space to reflect on their practices and to realize what changes need to be made in order to improve such practices. Teachers’ knowledge base should be broadened by new and other varieties of strategies and methods that they can use more effectively to promote student learning. Any relevant teacher training programme plan that supports teacher change and enlists the key issues relating to enhancing

teaching and learning can assist with transforming education efficiently. The underpinning issue is relevance. This research has provided me with the understanding of what I need to adapt in my own practices and have given me the opportunity to influence discussions on professional development at work. We have regular work in progress sessions where we share ideas on what we want to include in our professional development programmes and I am using the insight gained through this research to influence the directions we take at the SDU.

### **5.3.8 Whole school development**

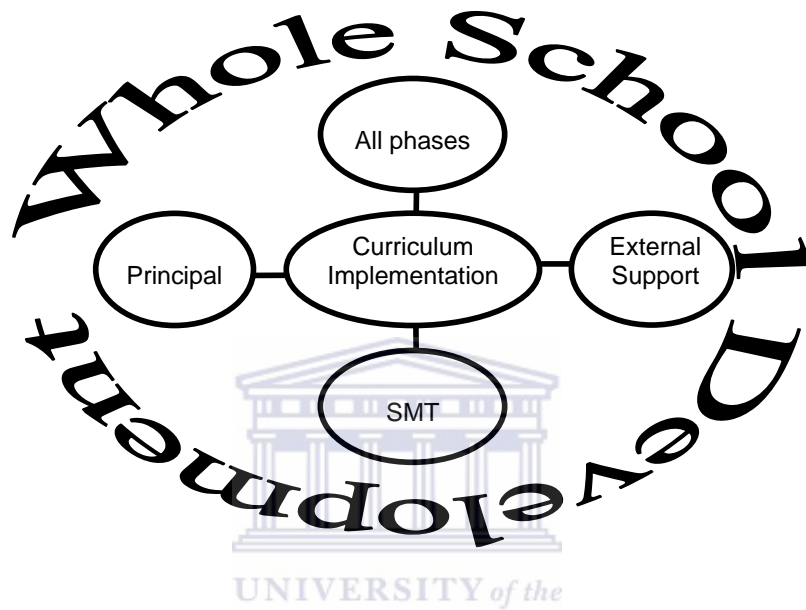
Another useful strategy to improve and enhance the implementation of the curriculum would be the application of an Organizational Development Framework. This framework which is used by Davidoff & Lazarus (2001), as well as other in service teacher organizations, is quite appropriate because it proposes to work on the structures of the whole school and has as a core purpose the development of teaching and learning as central to the school.

The Organizational Development Framework has clear intentions to analyze every aspect of the whole school and thus provides a holistic look into the school and its different entities. This organizational development framework is useful as a basis for solving problems and assists with understanding the problem before an attempt is made to solve it. A relevant professional development programme for the whole school should help teachers to understand the curriculum better. Such programmes should be owned by the whole organisation and must support teacher change to deal with the key issues relating to enhancing teaching and learning. Such development plans should be useful, functional and should aim at improving the core goal of the school, which is enhancing teaching and learning.

Curriculum delivery, management and implementation must be the key aspect of schooling and all role players at different levels should work towards the objectives of successful curriculum delivery as a whole school. There should be clear alignment of whole school development, educator development and curriculum development. A lack of co-ordination and interaction amongst the components and role players responsible for effective curriculum implementation can lead to poor curriculum delivery and implementation.

The figure below indicates how I view whole school development with curriculum management and implementation as the core of any whole school development programme.

**Figure 4: Curriculum management and implementation as core for whole school development**



Any development programme for a school whether it be team building, leadership development, strengthening school management, Foundation Phase training, or other workshops and courses should ultimately result in the core objective of any school which is curriculum delivery to be enhanced

#### **5.4 Concluding remarks**

In spite of all the problems we are still facing in education today and in the rise of many echoing that the OBE education should be totally scrapped and many other negative issues mentioned as curriculum failure I still maintain that this should not stop us from implementing needed changes to improve our teaching and learning and classroom practices. I also argue that one of the crucial factors that was overlooked in training teachers to implement the new curriculum was that not enough if hardly any attention was given to demonstrate how the links should be made with the theory and the practice at the classroom level. Because of this lack of understanding the connection between the desired outcomes and

how to achieve them, the curriculum is not managed and implemented as effectively as the policy sets out to do.

A shared vision can positively impact on teacher attitudes and it is argued that such a shared vision or rather a broader shared vision by all role players in education is imperative. These role players would include educational institutions that impact on teachers' beliefs and even the manner in which they view and perform their tasks as teachers. Education departments at universities and colleges have a significant role to play in respect of making its contribution to teachers within the OBE paradigm and their courses offered to teachers should be designed in a way that it strengthens the OBE discourse in South Africa.

As a staff member at a university I have experienced the wealth and rich contribution that constructive OBE discourse and practices at university can bring to the whole OBE debate. Such OBE practices at university level not only model that which is expected of the teacher but also enriches the teacher's understanding of transformation in education. If teacher training institutions model a good OBE programme it will definitely assist teachers to view the problems that they encounter differently and aid in trying out methods to solve such problems. The Department of Education should work more closely with universities, NGO's and other professional organizations to ensure constructive partnerships between different role-players to improve the way teaching and learning is managed.

I have gained insight into how I should change my own practice in working with teachers in schools. This research provide me with three areas namely, the lack of understanding of assessment standards and the policy, making the theory link explicitly to the classroom practice and assisting teachers with adequate support after the introduction of any new approaches and methods of curriculum practice. I am hoping that this research will be able to close or narrow the gaps that exist in respect of the theory and practice of the RNCS. It should also provide opportunities for further teacher development in enhancing the ability of teachers with regard to curriculum implementation and improve problems experienced with the implementation of the new curriculum.

The data that is summarized in the research indicate the gaps and possibility of differentiated and sustainable support that is needed at school and specific Foundation Phase level. I am convinced that throughout all the educational changes that we have undergone in South

Africa, teachers have gained certain skills and knowledge that provide a base for pursuing successful curriculum implementation at the Foundation Phase. At the heart of it all is their passion and love for children who are entrusted in their care and who they have to shape and mould for the future.



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**APPENDIX A**

**Letter to WCED –Overberg District**

11 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Botrivier  
7185  
Tel: 028 2849286(h)  
0834338709 (Cell)  
E-mail: [dianne.hendricks@uct.ac.za](mailto:dianne.hendricks@uct.ac.za)

**Date: 17 May 2006**

For Attention:  
Me. W. Colyn  
Circuit Manager  
Overberg District

Dear Me. Colyn

Request for access to X Primary School.

I am currently a student in the Structured masters Course namely Masters in Curriculum, Action research and School Improvement at the University of the Western Cape.

I wish to conduct my research at X Primary School.

**My research looks at the following:**

“The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation Phase, with specific reference to Integration and Progression”

The purpose of my research is to investigate to what extent Foundation Phase educators are managing the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement as set out in policy documents. I will be using questionnaires, observations and interviews as my research tools.

The benefit of the study can lead to the development of recommendations to promote optional implementation of the RNCS at schools.

Thanks for your assistance in this regard.

Yours faithfully

Diane Hendricks.

## APPENDIX B

### Letter to participants

Hallo.....

Hartlik dankie dat jy ingestem het om my met my navorsing te help. Ek vertrou dat hierdie navorsing 'n uitstekende bydrae kan lewer om die waarde van Grondslagfase onderrig en leer wat die fondament vir enige verder opvoeding is te verterk en te ondersteun.

Ek sluit die opvoeder profiel en vraagstuk in wat jy asb. moet voltooi. Ek hoop dat jy dit aan my kan terug besorg by volgende Woensdag 31 Augustus 2006, indien moontlik. Voel vry om dit in Afrikaans of Engels te beantwoord soos wat dit vir jou gemaklik is. Ek weet jy sal net jou eerlike menings as individu verskaf en dit word hoog op prys gestel. Die vraagstuk maak voorsiening vir jou algemene kommentaar ten opsigte van die nuwe kurrikulum en hoe jy dit ervaar. Weereens wil ek jou die versekering van konfidensialiteit en wedersydse vertrou en respek gee.

As jy enige vrae het kan ek by die onderstaande kontak besonderhede gevind word.

Vriendelike groete

Diane Hendricks

Tel (h) 0282849286

(sel) 0834338709

e-pos [dianne.hendricks@uct.ac.za](mailto:dianne.hendricks@uct.ac.za)



## APPENDIX C

### Teacher Profile

First Names: ..... Surname: ..... Gender: .....

Tel (h): ..... Tel (w): ..... Fax: ..... Cell: .....

E-mail (h): ..... E-mail (w): .....

Postal Address (h): .....  
 .....

School Name: ..... EMDC: .....

Language (Mark √)

Home	Second	Third		Principal	HOD	Teacher

Phase currently teaching (Mark √)

	Foundation Phase	Intermediate Phase	Senior Phase	Further Ed & Training
2005				
Previously				

Current Teaching Grade Medium of instruction at school

2005		English	Afrikaans	Xhosa	Other
No. of learners in your class					

How many years have you been teaching?	What is the highest level of formal education that you have.
--	--

Indicate any development courses/ workshops or studies you completed which included Management of the Curriculum as part of such development.

Course/Workshop	School	Teacher Training College/Technikon	University

(Adapted from TWW 2006)

## APPENDIX D

### Questionnaire for Foundation Phase Teachers

Please complete the questionnaire individually by answering the following questions.

Make a tick (✓) in the column of your choice.

Also include any general comments in the space provided

**School:**

**Date:**

**Teacher:**

**Grade:**

<b>PLANNING</b>				
NO	ITEM	YES	UN SURE	NO
1.	Do teachers have a structured time for planning and discussion of the new Curriculum?			
2.	Do you plan alone?			
3.	Do you plan as part of a team?			
4.	Do you have a planning file?			
5.	Is there evidence in your planning of conceptual progression across the grades?			
6.	Planning is done according to the RNCS: Learning Areas, Focus (Content for NS), Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards			
7.	Are you confident that you are implementing the RNCS properly?			
8.	Indicate if you need assistance with the implementation of the new curriculum?			

<b>ASSESSMENT</b>				
NO	ITEM	YES	UN SURE	NO
1.	Teachers assess learners on a continuous basis.			
2.	Learner performance is assessed according to the Assessment Standards of the Learning Outcomes as stated in the RNCS.			
3.	Assessment is standardised according to the RNCS 1 – 4 codes.			
4.	Differentiation is employed in the preparation and use of: activities/worksheets/assignments to suit the needs of individual learners.			
5.	Portfolios reflect the progress of learners.			
6.	Learner progress is recorded regularly.			
7.	There are records of learners who are at risk.			
8.	School Assessment Management Policy is in place.			

<b>GENERAL</b>					
<b>No</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>NEVER</b>	<b>1 per term</b>	<b>1 per month</b>	<b>More often</b>
1.	List other resources and curriculum structures you have in your school: How often do you engage with it?				
	a)				
	b)				
	c)				
	d)				
	e)				
2.	How often do you use a library / resource centre?				
3.	Number of RNCS workshops attended.				
4.	Have you been part of any Curriculum / Educational professional development programmes or projects?  If yes, what programmes or projects were they?				
5.	What other resources or curriculum development do you need to assist you with the implementation of the RNCS?				



## APPENDIX E


### Observation schedule

#### Research Topic:

“The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation Phase,  
with specific reference to Integration”

**RESEARCHER: DIANE HENDRICKS**

School:	
Teacher:	
Grade:	
No. of learners in class:	
Date:	
Lesson starts at :	Lesson ends at:
Lesson topic:	
Integration:	
Classroom organisation:	
Classroom setting:	
Comments	

RNCS features and factors noted	Lesson procedure	General Comments
	 <p>UNIVERSITY <i>of the</i> WESTERN CAPE</p>	

(Adapted from Rural Education Project docs 2006)

## APPENDIX F

### Questionnaire for Foundation Phase Head of Department

#### Research Question

To what extent are Foundation Phase teachers managing the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement as set out in policy documents?

**School:**

**Foundation Phase HOD:**

**Grade:**

#### Questions

1. What were your first impressions of OBE and C2005?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



2. Did you receive the necessary training to implement C 2005 and was it adequate?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What in your experience are the difficulties that teachers are facing with the implementation of the new curriculum?

.....

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.....

.....

.....

4. What would you define as successes of the new curriculum?

.....

.....

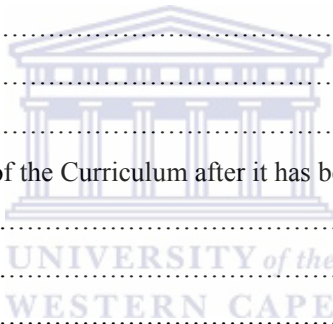
.....  
.....  
.....

5. Do you meet regularly to sort out problems or have discussions and what is the focus of the meetings?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6. What are the areas of the new curriculum that teachers have difficulties with?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



7. Is there a better understanding of the Curriculum after it has been revised?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. What in your view can still be done to support teachers in the Foundation Phase with the implementation of the new curriculum?

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.



## APPENDIX G

### Interview of Education Specialist

General information that will be asked from the participants.

Name & surname:

Organisation:

Number of teaching years:

Number of years working with teachers:

Years experience in the Foundation Phase or working with the Foundation Phase:

Which grade(s) are you working with this year?

Gr. R	Gr.1	Gr.2	Gr.3
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How many schools are you working with?.....

Questions for the interview with Education Specialists

1. Mention any features of the new curriculum which in your opinion are positive and why?
2. What is your biggest challenge in the classroom / teaching with regard to the management of the new curriculum and what are you doing to overcome it?
3. How can curriculum implementation and management be improved?

4. Do you meet regularly to plan, discuss and reflect on the management of the curriculum at your school / organisation and how do you do this?
5. What strategies do you use to improve curriculum management at Foundation Phase level?
6. Do you receive satisfactory curriculum support at your school or organisation and what does it entail?
7. Mention any other curriculum support that you may need or areas of the new curriculum that you wish to know more about? Please explain your choice
8. Identify three key elements of curriculum delivery that will require curriculum support and explain how you think such support can be given to teachers in the Foundation Phase?
9. List three professional development workshops (their titles and content) which you think teachers need in order to assist the with curriculum implementation and explain why you have made these choices.
10. Feel free to give any general comments, concerns or questions that you might have with regard to the new curriculum that should be implemented in schools.

